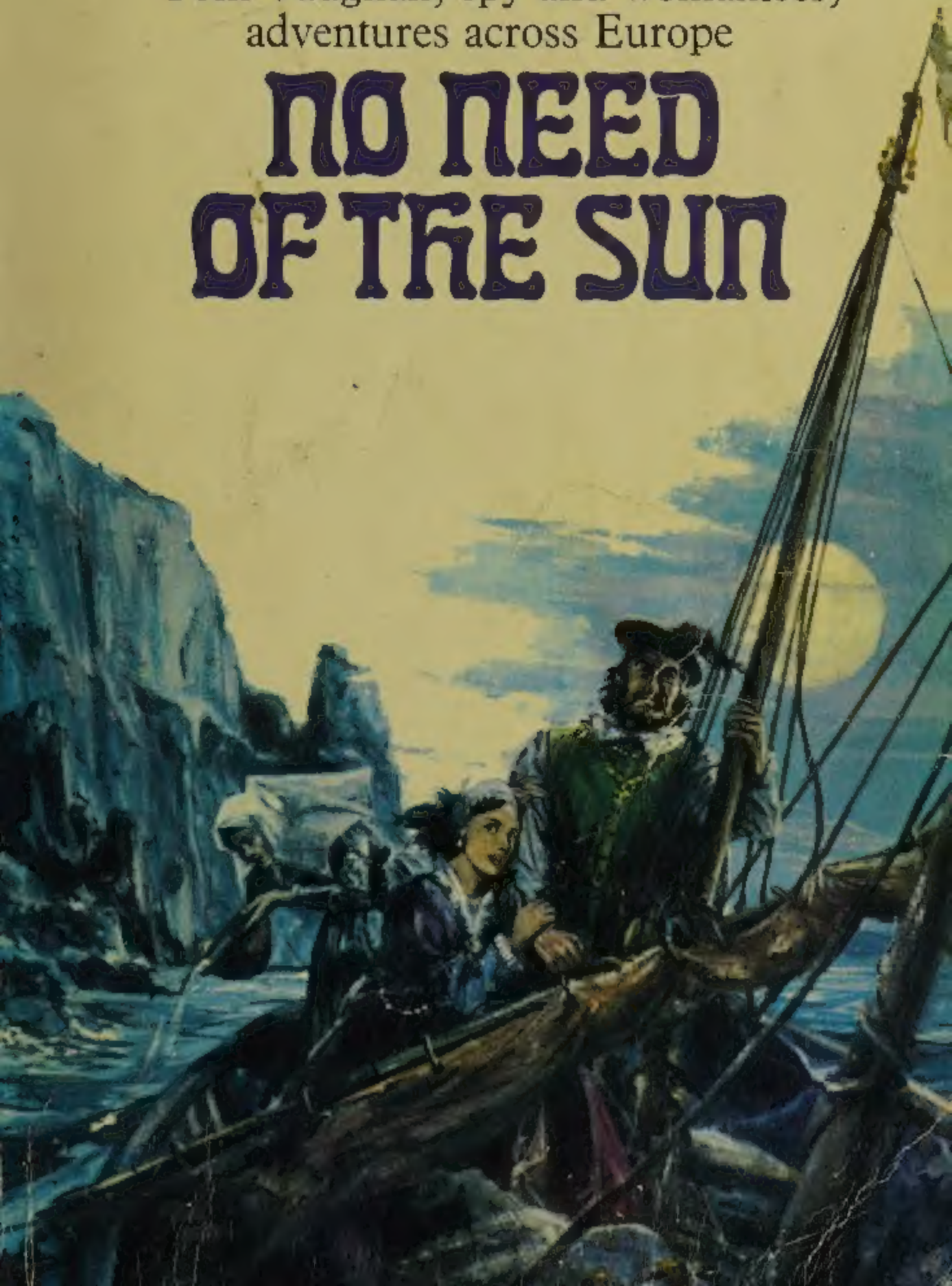
CORONET

Alison Macleod

author of *The Trusted Servant*

In the reign of Bloody Mary
Tom Vaughan, spy and womaniser,
adventures across Europe

NO NEED OF THE SUN



NO NEED OF THE SUN

At the end of Alison Macleod's novel *The Trusted Servant*, Tom Vaughan was exiled to Venice. *No Need of the Sun* shows him driven from there by the dangerous cross-currents of sixteenth-century life. Against his will he goes to Calvin's Geneva, whose enthusiasts praise it in Biblical terms. 'The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it.' Caught in a clash between the devotees and the disillusioned, Tom at the same time finds himself torn by a guilty and hopeless love. This love, overcoming his natural cowardice, leads him into adventures which culminate in an unexpected climax.

With the same classic qualities which distinguished *The Heretics* and *The Trusted Servant*, Alison Macleod's new novel has vivid characterisation and detail in an exciting story.

Also by the same author

The Trusted Servant

and available in Coronet Books

No Need of the Sun

Alison Macleod

CORONET BOOKS
Hodder Paperbacks Ltd., London

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First printed 1969 by Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.
Coronet Edition 1971

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Printed and bound in Great Britain for
Coronet Books, Hodder Paperbacks Ltd,
St. Paul's House, Warwick Lane,
London, E.C.4
by Hunt Barnard Printing Ltd,
Aylesbury, Bucks.

ISBN 0 340 15807 7

To
JACK SELFORD

1

It was at night I wrote, in the deep winter. Venice is quiet then. Only now and again the cry of a gondolier, giving his harsh warning as he approached a corner, would sound as if the warning were meant for me.

I could not see the gondolier. My window, even by day, showed me only the house opposite, and the narrow alley between. At night there was nothing but the circle my candle made. Outside that circle the shadows of my crimes waited for me to bring them, one by one, into the light. I used to write page after page of elegant self-excuse. Then that wordless cry of warning would awaken me to shame. I would tear up what I had done and begin afresh. Or try to begin, and find that my fingers were numb.

When a charcoal brazier is lit it gives off deadly fumes, and so it must be put outside in back alley or street, wasting what little heat it has, and poisoning the passers-by. Then, when the charcoal glows red, it is reckoned safe, and the brazier is brought indoors. Every evening, when I said goodnight to Marco Rafael, and left him reading (or entertaining some guest who wanted to study the Bible in Hebrew and Greek) I would go to my room and find that Marco's wife Giulietta had put a glowing brazier there. Encouraged by the warm look of the thing, I would sit down to write, and, for an hour or two, not feel the gradual chilling. When you are cold in England you throw a fresh log on the fire. But if you put more charcoal on a brazier it makes more dangerous fumes. During the thirteen years I had followed Cardinal Pole about Italy, I had not felt this as a great inconvenience. There had always been a servant somewhere who could be called to bring a freshly-glowing brazier. But now, for the first time, I was not attached to the household of any great man. I had done what Margaret had said I never did—become my own master, and made a reckoning with my own conscience. Living in Marco

Rafael's little house, I could do that. But I could not also have servants to wait on me.

Every night, then, I went to bed cold. On my cold pillow I would find some cold ghost, some forgotten creature whom I had left out of my confession. To lay the ghost I would promise to write of it the next day. To allay my own wakefulness I would make believe I was warm.

In January 1558 I would wake sometimes, long before it was light, and hear a crackling. Then I knew that there was thin ice on the canals, and that it was breaking up among the market boats which bring the food to Venice. It was then I felt most exiled, most alone.

In the morning Marco Rafael would come running up the stairs as if he were a young man. I would dress quickly and go with him to early Mass in the church of I Frari. Like any other church, this one was full of chattering gossips, who paid attention to the priest only at the moment when the bell rang, and the Host was elevated. But Marco, being a converted Jew, stayed reverently silent. To keep him company, I would be silent too. Shivering in the dark church, I would watch the candles, where they flickered before Bellini's colours. Though the cherubs in the picture played a lute and a recorder, and the music I could hear was from a choir, they seemed one and the same.

What sort of a Catholic was I? The usual sort. I thought little of priests, and less of our present Pope. I thought once a year often enough to confess my sins, and three days long enough to keep my promises of amendment. Yet, because I had once been estranged from the Church, it was very precious to me. I could not think of beginning the day without early morning Mass. The changing music, the unchanging words, the new paintings, the new statues, the old walls—these came every day as an assurance to me that God could indeed work miracles here on earth. If the great men of the Church, bloodthirsty and full of greed, could build and maintain a pattern of such beauty, then God must be guiding them despite themselves. As (I thought) He had often guided me.

We would go back to the house for our breakfast of bread and wine. Giulietta would never sit down with us, but as she grew accustomed to me she would, more and more often, come out

of her kitchen, to make sure the brazier was glowing, or pick up the books from the floor.

It had been Marco's notion that I should write the story of my life. I told him how hard I found it. "The trouble is," I said, "that I can't see what the purpose of my book will be. Am I still to say I did right, when I disobeyed old King Henry, when instead of killing Cardinal Pole I fell at his feet and begged his forgiveness? Am I to say that I did right last year, when I disobeyed Cardinal Pole, and saved twenty-two heretics from the fire? Am I to write a book which tells subjects to disobey their kings? Or secretaries to betray their masters?"

"You seem to draw lessons from your life, as if it were the Gospel," Marco said. "Then make it Gospel first! Write down the truth!"

Giulietta laughed. "If I were to write the story of my life," she said, "the lesson would be that children ought to disobey their parents. I nearly starved myself to death when my father forbade me to see Marco. So in the end I got my way, and we were married. Now every woman in the parish envies me my husband."

"For his good looks?" asked Marco with a smile.

"Of course!" Giulietta said. They looked at each other as they so often looked—he seeing in this fat housewife his angel, she seeing strength and manliness and warm protection, in a bent old Jew.

They would quarrel sometimes. When Marco had a summons to the Doge's palace, to interpret the words of some foreign ambassador, he would change his old black robe for court dress. That is, he would put on the clothes I had ordered for him in London, twenty-five years before. Wearing the crimson of old King Henry's time, he would tell his wife how good the cloth was, how far from wearing out.

"I wish it would wear out!" she used to say. "Why can't you dress in the fashion, like Signor Vaughan?"

To make the peace between them, I would explain that I was as thrifty as Marco. My starched ruffs, my doublets of rich dark velvet embroidered with silver, were what I had been obliged to wear at the court of King Philip and Queen Mary. Now I was wearing them out, to save buying anything new. Besides, English clothes were better for keeping the cold out than anything made in Venice.

. "Then you do find our house cold!" Giulietta said, changing her ground. "That's Marco's fault; he's too mean. He won't let me lay a carpet and hang velvet curtains here, only in the bedrooms. Look at this room! What must people think?"

"That we're poor," said Marco. "Let them think so! Besides, if we had carpets and velvet hangings here, they would get in the way of the books."

So the floor was all plain flagstones, and the table a piece of oak, chosen to be stout enough to hold the books. The chairs, too, were plain; Marco liked to stand on them, to reach books down from the top shelves.

He had some time, that winter, to spend in study, because I did part of his work. I could not interpret within the Doge's Palace; the state secrets of the Republic are for Venetians alone. But when a message came from the Rialto, to say that some English or French or Spanish merchants wanted an interpreter, I would often go in Marco's place. He had work enough to do interpreting the Eastern languages—Turkish, and Arabic, and Greek.

Though interpreters are not well paid, they soon find out which ventures are going to prosper, and they can bestow their money accordingly. I could pay Giulietta well for my lodging, and still make a profit by lending here and there. Some of my money I always kept safe in the Banca Giro, in case I should suddenly return to England.

When I was among the merchants, helping them to change their money under the arcades of the Piazza, or bargain for silk in the Merceria, I heard the gossip of the city and the world.

I heard that the Doge was not on speaking terms with the Pope's Nuncio, Cardinal della Casa, who had been for fourteen years urging Venice to take stronger measures against heresy.

I heard that an alchemist had been imprisoned for trying to turn branches of trees into gold . . . That the Pope had abandoned his war against King Philip . . . That an Albanian, finding his wife unfaithful, had set on twelve Turks to rape her, so that she died . . . That the Turks had raided Sorrento, and had carried off 3,000 people, now held to ransom on the Island of Procida . . . That the Roman Inquisition had found no evidence against Cardinal Morone, but that the Pope was none the less keeping

him in prison as a heretic . . . That a gentleman of Mantua had committed incest with his sister.

This last I thought incredible, but the Italians observed: "Who knows? When Messer Bernardo is in his rage, he won't leave any woman alone."

My fellow-countrymen, the English merchants, talked of our own disgrace—that the French had captured Calais. "All because the Queen took us into King Philip's war!" they said.

They told me, too, what was going on inside England. Cardinal Pole was ill. So was Queen Mary; her doctors had given up hope of her ever having a child. From Brussels her husband, King Philip, wrote to her by every post, urging her to declare Elizabeth her successor.

The London merchants always began their talk by proclaiming themselves good Catholics. But soon they knew me as the man who had (by intention) saved one heretic, and (as it happened) another twenty-one. I had promised Cardinal Pole not to make the story public, but it seemed the Londoners already knew it from servants' gossip. So they regarded me as a man they could talk to, and they told me how they were fretting about the future. If King Philip liked Elizabeth so much, they reasoned, she must be as firm a Papist as her sister.

One merchant grumbled that Elizabeth went every day to Mass. "But so do you!" I said.

"What do you take me for?" he whispered. "You think I want to dance on hot faggots? I'll tell you this, though. When times change, I'd rather be me than I would be Cardinal Pole. That man doesn't know what's in store for him."

By this merchant I sent a letter to Margaret, wife of the carpenter Joseph Thaxted, giving her my address and asking for news of Timothy.

I had not thought of doing this when I left England, the previous September. I felt then that I had done all I could for Timothy; what happened to him next was his own concern. I did not try to follow his journey to Frankfurt, but sailed to Bordeaux, and made my way to Venice overland.

But now I felt myself alone. Marco had his wife, and a son whom he seldom saw, but spoke of with great pride, since he was Professor of Greek at Bologna. All I had was a mistress, whom

I did not love. (She was a seamstress who had made new shirts for me; I still found that one thing led easily to another.) My mind dwelt more and more on Timothy.

The sleety winds were calmed, and the lagoon was no longer a bitter grey. One day it grew suddenly so warm that the canals began to stink. The storytellers and ballad singers appeared; in each little square the people gathered round them. Rich men hired companies of actors to play in their palaces, letting their friends in for nothing, and the rest of us if we paid. I delighted in these occasions; if the play was poor, I could watch the spectators. The most famous courtesans would come in low-cut gowns, to show off their costly flesh.

Only the previous August I had thought my life was over, and had not been sorry. Now I could not believe it was by chance that God had let me see another spring. I was without a master, without a country, and forty-five years old. But I might yet achieve something. I finished the writing of my confession. I let Marco read it, and then left it in his care, not knowing who else could ever be trusted with it.

We were more busy now that the foreign merchants could come over the Alps. Often Marco and I would both be needed, and then we would walk to the Rialto together, over the old rickety wooden bridge. We would meet, now and again, men who greeted Marco without looking at him, who smiled sideways, with downcast eyes. These men seemed to me like any other Venetians, with dark skins and big noses. Marco told me they were Jews.

"They are like my mother," he said. "Proud of me, for being in the Doge's favour, but ashamed as well, because I have turned Christian."

Marco's mother, eighty-five years old and very pale, still came to the house when she thought the other Jews would not see her. Like many of the Jews driven out of Spain, she had never learned more than the few Italian words she needed for her marketing. That was her excuse for not speaking to Giulietta. But I patched up a peace between them. Talking Spanish and Italian by turns, I told them that, if they could not learn each other's languages, they must both learn English. Then I went round the kitchen pointing to each thing in turn, and giving it its English name.

The shortness of our words made them both laugh; they thought Englishmen must be like babies beginning to talk.

"Fat!" Giulietta chanted. "Pan! Pail! Broom! Bread! Bran!"

The old lady corrected her. "The broom. The bread. The bran." She was proud of being able to say our "th", which was too much for Giulietta.

"But this is the language the new Jews talk!" she said. "Those noisy people who come crowding in on us nowadays."

"No, Mother!" said Marco. "The German Jews talk German. Tom says 'bread'. They say 'brot'."

The old lady came the next day, with a present under her cloak —a cake baked by Marco's sister. She held it out to Giulietta, and (I believe for the first time in her life) smiled at the Christian woman.

"The kek!" she said.

A few days later, when we reached home after nightfall, Giulietta said that there had been a message from the Ghetto. Marco's mother was dying.

"She doesn't want to see me," Giulietta sobbed. "The message was that you should go alone." And even while she said it, she interrupted herself. "But, Marco! I never thought! It may be a trap."

Not answering her, not eating the meal she had prepared, he ran upstairs. She called after him: "It *must* be a trap!"

Marco came down carrying an iron-bound box. He began to oil the padlock which held it shut.

"Come, come!" he said to Giulietta. "These are my own people. They hate me, I know, but they will hardly kill me."

"Oh, not that sort of trap! It's the Christians who are jealous of you."

"Of me? Why?"

"Oh, Marco, don't be such a simpleton! I hear it all the time. In the market, when I'm choosing the meat, some woman sidles up to me and says: 'Of course, you can afford the best of everything.' They begrudge us every mouthful."

"That!" said Marco. "That's only what I've lived with, since I was a child. Why do you think I like this room to look poor? It's the room strangers come into. I was brought up to hide every small possession, every comfort that a Christian might envy."

"But it's not only money they envy," Giulietta said. "It's your being in the Doge's favour, and you can't hide that. What they want is to tell the Doge that you're not really converted, that you go back to the Synagogue in secret. If once they catch you visiting the Ghetto —"

"Are you telling me that I must not go to my mother's death-bed?"

"Oh, you must go, of course, but not alone!" Giulietta broke off to ask suddenly: "What are you doing?" Marco had all this time been trying to fit the keys into the rusty lock. The box opened at last. He began to take out gold coins, each one wrapped in a piece of rag so that it would not chink if the box were shaken.

"It's after curfew time," he said. "I shall have to bribe the guards to let me into the Ghetto."

"No!" Giulietta cried out. "That's what you must not do. They'll arrest you, and then you'll never see your mother. The only way is to go openly. Go to the Doge and ask him for a pass. You've never once asked him for anything for yourself."

"Your wife is right," I said.

While Marco hesitated, Giulietta broke out again: "And for God's sake not alone! Take a witness with you. Take Signor Vaughan!"

I seconded this too. Marco stared at me. "Are you really willing to go into the Ghetto?" he asked.

"Why not?" I said. "Do you think I still believe the fairy stories?"

We went together. At the nearest landing stage we hired a gondola, and told the man to hurry to the Doge's Palace. But a gondola is not well made for speed.

"We could have run there in half the time," Marco grumbled.

I said: "We shall need all our breath."

At the Palace Marco's face was well known, but he did need his breath for pleading with guards and scribes and secretaries. At last we reached the Doge's private secretary. He explained that the Doge was entertaining the Pope's Nuncio to supper. (Which I thought strange; they were known as deadly enemies.) But he would ask the Doge, even at the supper-table, to give us a pass. He left us, but soon returned.

"Why," he asked Marco, "do you want a pass for this gentleman?"

Marco said: "He knows my mother. He speaks her language."

"But he is not related to her? Well! We'll see."

He disappeared again. From the ante-room where we sat we could hear the Doge's feast. A boy's voice began singing to the lute. The word *amore* rang out on the high notes. Another song followed, and another.

"What do they care?" Marco said. "It's only a Jewess dying."

The secretary's reluctance to let me go with Marco made me more than ever determined not to leave him. Even if Giulietta were wrong, even if there were no plot against him, he might run into trouble through sheer unreasoning grief. Already he was saying: "I should have been braver! I should have gone straight to the guards with a bribe. I could have been there long ago."

"This way is more safe," I said.

He shook his head. "I should never have come here, if I had known of this reconciliation with the Nuncio. It means no good . . . But who knows? Anything I do may be wrong. Any step I take may loose the avalanche."

"What avalanche?"

"It's always, always in my mind. That because of something I do, the mob will rise and overpower the guards around the Ghetto, and massacre my people. And do you think *I* would be safe? They'd say I was only pretending to be a Christian. They would torture me to make me admit that I secretly said Hebrew prayers. They would torture Giulietta to make her denounce me."

"Marco! This is Venice. The people are civilised."

"The people seemed to be civilised, once, in Spain."

When the secretary came back, it was only to ask me: "Have you any hope of converting this woman to Christianity?"

"Yes, indeed!" I said. "I have almost converted her already."

"Oh, in that case!" the secretary exclaimed.

He disappeared for the third time, but soon came back with passes for us both, signed by the Doge himself.

We had lost an hour and a half. There was a further hindrance. When we came back to our gondola we found a man already in

it. To our protests he said: "I must come with you. It is the Nuncio's wish."

He was a priest. "I have brought the holy water for the baptism," he said. "Beside the Sacraments. We must never lose the chance to save even one soul from the brink of Hell."

Marco seemed rooted to the quay. I pulled him aboard and told the gondolier to take us to the Ghetto. On the way I said to the priest: "Do you speak Spanish?"

"Not a word," he said. "Why?"

I said: "The lady whose soul we are trying to save understands nothing else. You will have to wait outside the house while we speak to her. If we are successful we will call you in."

I heard Marco's breath come out in a long, soft sigh, as if a great weight had been shifted.

We moored in a gloomy place. The high houses—higher than any others in Venice—loomed above the encircling canal in utter blackness.

"Is it true," the priest asked, "that they can't mix the dough for their Passover, without some Christian blood?"

Marco did not answer. Nor did I. I thought it might be better if the priest went on believing that. He would be less likely to follow us inside. And indeed he seemed glad enough to stay in the warm guardhouse by the gate.

When the guards had let us through, we found ourselves in an open space. It was a market, full of meat and fruit and fish and cloth, and the colours of all these things glittered and swayed in the moving lights. Every stall had a lantern, and, besides, the customers carried their own lanterns, to see better what they were buying. The lights fell on hands outthrust in argument, on wagging beards, on the faces of women laughing. They all seemed to be shouting, the women boldly answering the men. Here and there I caught a word of German. These, then, were the "new Jews" whom Marco's mother despised. I was sorry that we had to hurry past them; I liked the look of those women.

Marco led me through an arch into another open space, and then into a doorway black as Hell. We climbed a staircase which reeked of poverty. The walls were dank to the touch. Was Marco, then, really a mean man? Why had he let his mother live in a place like this?

Somewhere about the fifth storey, Marco groped for a door, and knocked. As we waited he whispered a warning to me, to keep my hat on indoors.

We heard a bolt move, and then stop moving. A woman's voice said in Spanish: "Is that you, Jacob?"

I thought we had come to the wrong place, but Marco said: "Yes, here I am."

I had never thought of him as Jacob. (Marco is the name given to all baptised Jews in Venice, because the baptism takes place in St. Mark's.)

The woman opened the door, and held up a lantern. When she saw me, she cried out: "Who's this?"

"Don't be afraid!" said Marco. "This is only my English friend, who lives in my house. Mother knows him well."

"Don't you try any of your tricks on me!" the woman said. "Jacob, if I thought you'd brought a priest, I'd slam the door in your face."

"Señora!" I said. "I assure you that I am a gentleman, not a priest."

"Forgive me, señor," said the woman, letting me in. "But we've been so pestered with priests who come here in disguise! If we dare to answer them back, they put us in prison for blasphemy."

Marco whispered to her: "How is Mother?"

She shook her head. "It can't be long. She's prepared for it, Jacob. She told the doctor not to torment her with remedies."

We were standing in a kitchen, a clean place, but poor and bare. The woman put down her lantern. Now that it was not shining into my face, I could see her. She was between fifty and sixty, and blear-eyed with weeping. I thought she had more on her mind than simple grief. When Marco kissed her she started back from him, with a frightened look.

"Rebecca!" Marco whispered. "Let me see her now."

Rebecca led us into a large room, which, after the bare kitchen, dazzled me. The old lady was lying on a bed of down, surrounded by hangings of rich brocade and velvet, under a bedspread of embroidered silk. I could see all this by a prodigality of candles.

There were about a dozen people in the room. They drew aside to make way for Marco and me, but they did not greet us.

"Mother!" Marco said. "Mother, I've brought your friend Tom to see you."

She tried to smile, and whispered a greeting to me. I bowed low to her, and lifted her hand from the bedspread, and kissed it. She said: "Thank you."

I knew then that she was dying. Her face was no paler than usual, but her spirit was humbled. Why should she give gentle, timid thanks for what she had always accepted as her due? I stood back so that Marco could sit beside her, supporting her head on his arm.

"Mother!" he said. "For all I've done to offend you, I beg your forgiveness."

She repeated faintly: "Forgiveness . . . Oh, my son, I have so much to thank you for! All the money . . . all this . . ."

Her voice failed. Rebecca came with a damp sponge, and held it on her brow. Marco said: "Mother, are you sure you are not angry with me?"

"How could I be?"

"Or . . . with my wife?"

"Son, when you have come as far as this, you'll find hardly anything matters. Only this matters—that your wife is a good woman, and makes you happy. I did not ask her to come here, because . . . there are some who might not make her welcome, and . . . and it's such a business, to get into the Ghetto at night. All those bribes . . ."

"We did not pay any bribes, Mother. The Doge gave us passes."

"The Doge! He's good to you, isn't he? And your boy is doing well, at Bologna?"

"Very well, Mother."

"Thank God!" she murmured.

They fell silent. I looked round at the sad, watchful, careful faces. Was there to be no ceremony for the dying? More people had come in. But there was nobody who looked like a rabbi. Not that I knew, or could guess, what a rabbi did.

Presently Marco said: "Mother, are you sure that in your heart there is no hatred for anyone?"

"Hatred? No. I don't hate even King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. If they had never turned us out of Spain, we should

never have seen Venice, and my son would not have been a famous man, the Doge's friend."

Marco smiled at this exaggeration, and kissed her gently. There was silence again. Some of the people in the room began to whisper. The dying woman said something in a language I did not know. Then she faltered, and went back to Spanish.

"Marco, how does it go? I have forgotten."

Marco prompted her in the strange language, and she began again. I looked round at the other people. They were no longer whispering. Their faces expressed a grave satisfaction, as if this were what they expected. All the men kept on their hats, and (as it seemed right) so did I.

The dying woman concluded her prayer with one word I knew. "Amen!"

"Amen!" echoed Marco. So did all the others. And I joined in.

Everything that happened in that long night seemed a dream. When the death-rattle began, it was the death-rattle of my own mother, who had died, spitting blood, when I was a boy of fourteen. That sound had been the signal that my mother was leaving me, and what I felt was anger. Why could she never be there when I needed her? Why had she not looked after me? Why had she not prevented her old Spanish priest, my tutor, from beating me till I bled? Why could she not make the servants give me proper meals? Why must she be for ever talking of Spain, and her high-born family, and never think of the family before her eyes? I had heard her say she never loved my father. Did she love me? She seemed taken up with saying prayers for her dead babies, whom she remembered by name, though I could not. Were there eight of them? Or nine? Were they boys or girls? I could not remember. They all seemed alike; a wax doll in a doll's coffin, shown to me once by the light of tapers, and then for ever hidden away.

I found I had tears in my eyes. Not for Marco's dying mother, nor for mine, but for myself. A little boy, neglected and alone . . . I knew I was a man of forty-five, and I felt ashamed of my tears. I turned away from the light. But then I saw that all the people in the room were weeping.

I went into the kitchen, which was now full of old women, and asked if I might have a cup of water. Instead, they gave me wine.

It made my head reel; like Marco, I had not eaten. The old women seemed to float about me, their gestures more slow than if they were under water. The "new Jews" outside had swaggered like any Germans on a market day. But these women moved like Spanish courtiers, even while the tears were streaming down their cheeks. From their talk I discovered that they were not weeping for the impending death. What moved them was that Marco—Jacob, the renegade—had come back at last, had shown that, after all, he knew how to be a good Jew. It was the first time I had heard those words together—"good" and "Jew". They would not have used the phrase, I believe, if they had not thought me one of themselves. I had spoken to them in Spanish, and my complexion was dark as theirs. Besides, I had said "Amen" to some heathen prayer. I felt guilty for deceiving them, but I could not explain; I was too weary and too drunk.

I went back to the old woman's bedside. How tediously the body struggles, long after the will to struggle is gone! Again and again I thought the rattling must end; and then it would seem, if anything, to grow louder. All this time Rebecca bathed the dying woman's brow, and Marco kept her head pillowed on his arm. Until one long breath came out, and was the last.

A soft wailing began as Marco brought the lids down over his mother's eyes. He was so stiff that he could hardly get his arm away. I helped him to rise. The people in the room, still wailing, made way for us, but did not look at Marco.

Rebecca joined us in the kitchen. Marco gave her the gold pieces he had meant to spend on bribes. "See that everything is done as it should be," he said.

She cried out: "But you must be there to say the Kaddish!"

"How can I?" said Marco. "I have been cursed in the Synagogue, and besides . . ."

Rebecca put her arms about his neck, and began to weep. We heard the wailing in the next room grow more sad and strong. Rebecca sobbed: "Oh, Jacob, Jacob!"

He murmured: "My sister, my darling! Come to see me after the funeral; tell me what it was like."

"I shall never be able to come," she said. "Samuel was angry with me for bringing you here tonight. Oh, Jacob, Jacob, I shall never see you again!"

We came out as day was breaking. By that grey light, the Ghetto looked more than ever wretched and poor. But I knew now that all its wealth was within.

In the guardhouse we found the priest asleep. He started up eagerly, asking: "Will she be baptised now?"

We had both forgotten his existence. But my courtier's tongue said smoothly: "Alas, in spite of all that we could do, the lady utterly refused to be baptised, and died in her own perverse religion."

"A soul gone straight to Hell!" the priest cried out. "Did you really do all you could?"

"Oh yes!" I said. "We both urged on her without ceasing the merits of Christ."

"I suppose," the priest said, "that the Jews answered you with horrible blasphemies."

"No," I replied, very firmly. "They said nothing."

There were no gondoliers about so early, and we walked home. The priest kept beside us, grumbling and throwing out hints. Marco seemed not to hear, but I soon understood that the little creature wanted to be paid for his night out of bed. He would have been content with a silver piece, but I gave him a gold one. It seemed, at the time, well spent, since it made him instantly leave us.

In the middle of the Rialto Bridge, out of earshot of both banks, Marco stopped and said: "I am sorry you had to tell so many lies for me, Tom. You were right; it was the safest way. When the gates of the Ghetto open this morning I will send a message to my sister, to make sure that everyone tells the same story."

I asked him: "What was it I said 'Amen' to?"

"My mother said the prayer which has to be said on the point of death. 'Into Thy hands, oh Lord, I commit my spirit.'"

"But that's what we say!"

"Yes. Do you believe God will send my mother to Hell, for saying it in Hebrew instead of Latin?"

"No."

"No." Marco looked round to make sure we were still alone. "Tom, if I believed that of God, I could not worship Him."

2

We heard a soft knocking, that evening, while we sat at supper. Marco unchained the door without surprise; it often happened that interpreters were wanted late at night. But this was not a messenger we knew. A man shrouded in a cloak asked for "Signor Tommaso Vaughan". When I said that was my name he handed me a letter. Then he turned to Marco, and whispered: "My master would like to see you."

"Your master?" Marco looked into the man's face. "Oh yes! I know who you are now. Tell your master this house is as good a place as any. We have so many visitors, one more will never be noticed."

When the man had left, Marco said to me: "Your letter is from Geneva."

I took the seal off. There was no address. But the name at the foot was "Timothy Thaxted". I trembled so that I could scarcely read the letter.

"Honoured sir . . ." I smiled. But what else could he call me? "Yesterday I heard from my mother. She writes that you are alive and safe, and for this I thank God. Sir, if I had never been grateful to you before, for saving my life, I would be grateful now, because now I know what joy there is in living on the earth. I have come to such a place as you may find in the Book of Revelation, where it is written: 'The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' God's work is done here, and it has been granted to me to do a small part. While I was busy at my trade as a carpenter, among the English exiles in Frankfurt, the call came to our church for men who could read and write English, and who knew the Bible well. I have been taught these things from childhood by the Brethren. So I came here to be a printer's reader. There are a dozen like myself employed on the

new *English Bible*, which is to be printed here. Although my work is like a pastime to me, I am paid for it. Indeed, I have earned my bread ever since I left England. Now, sir, I come to the thing most on my conscience, which is that you are an exile because you saved me. You may be in need of that £100 you lent me. I can send you £90 whenever you like; the goldsmiths here have means of sending money to Venice. But it will take me a year or two to save the other £10. I have bought a little piece of land outside this town, and wood, to build myself a house, as the people do here. When it is ready I shall have to buy more wood, and make furniture. My promised wife is a godly Italian woman, maid in a family which has come here for the sake of the Gospel. I have written to my mother and father to ask their blessing on this marriage. May I, sir, have your blessing too?

Yours in the Lord,
Timothy Thaxted."

I laughed at the strange word "godly" which I could imagine said in that thick Essex accent. I told Marco: "This is from the heretic whose place I took in prison."

"You mean," said Marco, "from your son."

"I must not call him that," I said, and felt all at once desolate. By writing of "my father and mother", Timothy had shown that he did not guess, or did not wish to guess, that I was his real father. I could not tell him. And yet I wished I were near him. I wished I could say that my £100 had not been a loan, but a gift. And, at that, only a little part of what I owed him.

"Write him a letter," Marco said. "The visitor I am expecting will carry it for you."

"But I ought to see him," I said. "I ought to see this woman. How does he know she is 'godly'? What language can they have in common?"

"Perhaps he takes after you, and breathes in languages with foreign air."

"If I were to visit this nest of heretics, and come back, would I be in trouble here?"

"There may be a safe way. This visitor, if he comes, will tell you."

The guilt I felt for the son I could not acknowledge, who

thought himself the son of a carpenter, was entangled in my mind with a new guilt. My present mistress, the sewing woman Miliella, was a widow, and I liked widows, particularly when they had no children. Yet I was old enough to know that, if a woman is barren with one man, it does not follow that she will be barren with another. Suppose I made this woman pregnant? I did not think I could ever again endure the knowledge that I had a child growing up somewhere, whom I could not find and could not help, who proved, when I came on him at last, to be of an uncouth religion, talking in terms that I could scarcely understand.

No; if I had another son, I would keep him with me. But that would mean marrying Miliella. And what would my life with her be like? She kept her room very clean. She also kept it full of charms against the evil eye. There were no books; the woman could not read. (A rarer thing in Venice than in London.) She chattered endlessly about lucky days, telling me what her neighbours had gained by praying to the right saint on the right day. When anyone's house was robbed in the night, she would say that the thief must have had a "corpse candle", made out of human fat, because this had the magic property of putting the owners into a sleep so sound that they would hear nothing.

My own conduct made me angry. I would not approach even the most elegant of the Venetian courtesans, because I would not risk the pox. Yet I was taking this risk of endless unhappiness. Whenever "Messer Bernardo was in his rage" I would go knocking at Miliella's door, as if I had no more sense than a young man.

Even the day after my son's letter came, even while I was thinking what good advice I should send him, I found myself eating my supper hastily, and asking Marco to leave the door unbolted, because I might be late. He did not ask me why.

I will say this for Miliella; she was silent when I most required her silence. Only afterwards did she begin to chatter. "I went to confession today."

"What for?" I asked. "It's not Easter."

"No, but at Easter the priest was angry with me. He would not believe I was repentant and meant to give you up. And I did mean it, really I did. I always mean it, while I'm in church. The priest said I must confess again before Whitsun. So I went to him

today, and it was very strange. He did not seem so angry, but he asked me a great many questions about you."

"What sort of questions?"

"Oh, he asked . . . did you ever make the sign of the cross? And I said you always crossed yourself when you heard the Angelus, even if you were in the middle of . . . Oh, yes! And he said—were you reverent before the image of Our Lady? I told him; always. I did not say that you were angry with me, for having too many images in my room. He did not ask me that. But he did ask—had you talked of turning lead into gold?"

"Tell him, if I ever do that, I'll give him a share."

"Tomà, why did he want to know these things?"

I said: "I suppose because I'm English. People think we're a nation of heretics."

"Oh! He said something about that too. He said perhaps you were pretending to be English. Real Englishmen have blue eyes and golden hair. I told him your mother had come from some other country. I couldn't remember where. Then he asked me what food you ate. I said you always told me not to cook you anything. That only made him more inquisitive."

"I know these inquisitive priests," I said. "Some of them take all their pleasure from imagining the act. And some want more. Did he try to seduce you?"

"Oh, no! He's an old man, Tomà. But he was so strange about the food. Until I said that sometimes, late at night, you had a piece of bread and a piece of ham, to keep your strength up. He asked if you knew it was ham, and I said—of course, what else? But . . . but the worst thing was, he asked me—was there anything strange about your . . . What could I say? I said it was the same as my late husband's, only better. No! I didn't say 'only better'. I didn't dare. But I told him you always felt warm. They say the thing the Devil has is ice-cold, and it hurts. Tomà, surely he couldn't think you were a devil?"

"He thinks I'm a Jew."

"Oh! But that's worse!" She sat up so suddenly that her crucifix bounced from one to the other of her naked breasts. "They drink the blood of poor little innocent children."

I said: "You know very well that I'm a good Catholic. Didn't you tell the priest that?"

"Yes, but he still seemed to be fretting over something."

"Did he say that you were not to do this any more?"

"No. No, he must have forgotten that part. He said I should watch you very carefully."

"In that case you'll have to come closer."

When I returned to Marco's house it was so late that I took pains to come in quietly. Indeed I made no noise till I was in the book-lined room, where (to my surprise) I found Marco still awake, deep in conversation with a man I did not know. The man started up. Marco said to him: "You are quite safe, Monsignore."

I bowed low, since this was a "Monsignore". But what did that mean? He was not an archbishop or cardinal, certainly. A nobleman, then? But he was dressed more plainly than a merchant. Marco did not introduce us. But he motioned me to sit down, and said to the stranger: "Monsignore, you may try to persuade Tom, if you like."

Scarcely glancing at me, the stranger said: "Don't call me Monsignore! I have no title now. Call me the name I was christened—Galeazzo. After all, we have been friends for a long time. And I am advising you *as* a friend. Marco! Think! Instead of wasting your days on the Rialto, you could do your real work, with Hebrew and Greek. Those Englishmen who are translating the Bible would greet you with open arms."

"And suppose," Marco said, "that my translation were to differ in some detail from that of Jean Calvin?"

"Then he would be delighted to discuss it with you. He is the most humble of men, always trying to improve himself by further study."

"I hope he studied his books well," said Marco, "by the light of the fire that burned his old friend Servetus."

Marco said this with a bitterness unlike himself; it startled me. Galeazzo's fattish face reddened in the lamplight. "Why don't you talk about what they did here, not two years ago? Why didn't you protest when the Doge drowned that poor gospeller Lupetino?"

"I did protest," whispered Marco, and his face looked more weary than I had seen it at his mother's deathbed. "I begged the Doge on my knees. I knew he was doing it only because he

needed, at that moment, to make friends with the new Pope. It is not the custom in Venice to execute heretics."

"It will be from now on," said Galeazzo. "Venice is growing weaker under these continual Turkish attacks. She must have allies, and one ally must be the Pope. Which means that Venice must persecute Protestants."

"Your friend the Marquis of Oria does not think so," Marco said. "He is living here quite openly, although there's a warrant out against him."

Galeazzo rapped out: "The Marquis of Oria is no friend of mine!"

Marco smiled, a little mischievously. "The Anabaptists had a congress here the other day," he said. "Fifty of them, from all over Italy. They thought Venice was the safest place to meet. And nobody breathed a word until it was all over."

"Don't you tell me what the Anabaptists are doing! I believe the Pope is paying them in secret, to undermine our unity."

"Such fine points are beyond me," Marco said. "As I see it, my duty is to stay here, and do what I can to help any poor soul who is in trouble for thinking seriously. I do not believe that the women who chatter through Mass, or the Bishops who promote their bastard sons, are the best Christians. But I am still a Catholic. I still believe that the Church may be reformed from within."

"How can it be? A Church that can't keep its own Bishops and Cardinals in order! Look at Cardinal d'Aragona, who had his own sister strangled, and her two children with her! He was allowed to die in bed. Does your Church act even against the priests who abuse their power in the confessional?"

"What our Church needs," Marco said, "is more Jews in it."

Disdaining to answer this, Galeazzo began to praise the "purification" of the Protestant cities.

"What you call purification looks to me like persecution," said Marco. "Why is Venice full of Jews driven from the German cities?"

"Not from Geneva!"

"The Jews were expelled from Geneva before Calvin's time. Perhaps he would have liked them. I have never met Jean Calvin, but from his writings he appears to me the perfect pattern of a rabbi."

Galeazzo went redder than before. Marco smiled and said: "Do you think that's an insult? The rabbi who taught me Hebrew was so famous for his learning that Christian students came to consult him from all the universities of Italy. I used to sit and listen while they disputed the meanings of Hebrew texts. That was when I first understood what a ferment was going on in these universities. I longed to go to one of them. But the rabbi told me I had to stay with my family. He was glad when we were all made to live in the Ghetto. Not only because the guards protected us from massacre, but because they kept out the ideas of the outside world. Isn't Calvin glad of his mountains—and for the same reason?"

"Certainly not!" said Galeazzo. "Geneva welcomes learned people. There is no comparison with your Ghetto."

Marco said: "The rabbi told me every day that I was one of God's chosen people. *Why* God had chosen us I was forbidden to ask. And now Calvin tells his followers that they are chosen people; God means to save them even against their will. And, like the Jews, they are forbidden to ask why."

"That's a distortion!" Galeazzo exclaimed.

"Is it? Surely Calvin's God—sterner than the Jewish God—created most of His children in order to send them to Hell."

"That's not what predestination means!"

"Forgive me, then!" said Marco mildly. "I must have misunderstood. But since my misunderstanding might put me in danger, I shall never go to Geneva. Perhaps Tom will. He wants to see the place, and visit someone he knows."

Galeazzo looked at me for the first time. "Of course!" he said. "You are the man the letter was meant for. The young Englishman tried to tell me something about you. But he speaks no Italian, and such barbarous French . . . Did you really save twenty-two Protestants?"

"It happened like that," I said.

"And yet you're not a Protestant?"

"God forbid!"

"Then what would you do in Geneva?"

"I want to see this young man. If, as you say, he speaks nothing but English, how can he know the girl he means to marry?"

"She says that she can understand him. She's been very headstrong in insisting on this marriage. It's a bad time for her to leave the Bologna family; Signora Bologna is about to have a child. But then they've always been too indulgent to young Rosa. They brought her up from a child. Now the girl will expect a dowry, and the Bolognas have nothing to give her."

"That need not be an obstacle," I said. "If you can assure me that this is a girl with a good understanding, and that she loves Timothy, I will provide for them both."

Galeazzo looked at me with a surprise which he instantly controlled. "In that case," he said, "I am sure the matter can be settled. Rosa is a good girl, I believe, though she likes her own way better than becomes a servant. But of course nothing will be done in a hurry. The marriage cannot take place until I return."

Now *I* looked surprised. He went on: "I have a certain standing among the Italian exiles. Marriages, contracts . . . these things are not arranged without reference to me. You see, we have to live as a community, to take care of our resources, because we have so little. It was the same for all of us; the moment we left Italy our property was confiscated. As if starvation would reconcile us to Rome! The Genevans insist on calling me: 'Monsieur le Marquis de Vico.' Which I am not, and am not going to be, although I am the next heir. The Emperor has decreed that, when my father dies, the title and estates will go straight on to my son, as if I were already dead. If I had not been able to smuggle out a few jewels . . ."

Although this man's voice was indeed the voice of a nobleman, it had a harsh, grating sound as it went over these grievances. He himself seemed to feel this; he broke off abruptly and said in a more cheerful tone: "Of course, we expected nothing else. Only it is hard, when one wants to reward a servant. Dr. Bologna, with all his noble connections, can hardly pay this girl her wages, let alone a dowry . . ."

"Dr. Bologna?" Marco asked. "Federico Bologna, who used to live here, in Venice?"

"That's the one."

"I did not know he was in Geneva."

"He's been there thirteen years."

"Is it really so long? It must be fifteen—no, sixteen years,

since I said goodbye to him. He was setting out for Naples then, to look for his brother. Did anything come of that?"

"Yes, he was made very welcome. But even his brother could not protect him from the power of the Church. The usual thing – he and his wife had to flee in disguise, with nothing but her jewels."

"A wife! That's new! What is she like?"

"She comes of a noble family."

"But does she love him? Does she understand him?"

Galeazzo said with a tight little smile: "When anyone finds fault with him, however mildly, she is like a wild cat leaping to his defence."

"Oh, I am glad!" Marco said. "He needed a defender. In this place he had so many enemies, it was a miracle he wasn't thrown into the Grand Canal. This is the best thing that ever I heard of Geneva – that it can harbour Federico Bologna."

"You see?" said Galeazzo. "It would harbour you as well."

Marco turned to me. "Tom, you can set your heart at rest. This girl will be a good wife to your Timothy. If she's grown up in the house of my dear old friend Federico, she has had such an example of courage, humility, gentleness —"

"He has done useful work for Geneva," Galeazzo put in. Then, briskly, he said to me: "I take it that you have no objection to leaving the question of this wedding until my return?"

"No objection at all," I said. "Unless there is reason for haste. If Timothy has made this girl pregnant —"

Galeazzo looked at me coldly. "Evidently you do not understand how we live in Geneva."

"Have you changed the nature of man?" I asked.

"That," said Galeazzo, "with God's help, is precisely what we have done."

I said: "Then it's no place for me."

Controlling his distaste, Galeazzo remarked politely, in general terms, that people should not go to Geneva unless they meant to fit into Genevan ways, for example by wearing very plain clothes, and learning French.

I told him, in French, that I had been well enough understood at the court of Henri the Second.

"Ah!" said Galeazzo. "But do you know the new Genevan words? For example, *le grabeau*."

"No," I said. "Unless it comes from the Spanish word *grabar* —to engrave, or to impress upon the mind."

"You speak Spanish!" Galeazzo exclaimed with sudden warmth.

"Like a Spaniard," Marco testified.

"Then," said Galeazzo, "you might possibly do me a favour."

I told him I would gladly do a favour for him, but not for his religion. "When I was in England last I saw the harm the Protestants had done in King Edward's time—church walls whitewashed bare, altars robbed . . . Every day, when I go into I Frari, I think how a heretic mob would ruin the paintings and steal the gold candlesticks."

"There have, I know, been some excesses," Galeazzo acknowledged. "Mistakes have been made . . . But the truth is, I want your help in a private matter. Although the thing is so very well known by now that I can hardly call it private. I have a wife, who refuses to live as my wife. She's a Spanish lady, from Naples, and she believes whatever her Spanish priests tell her. They say she'll be damned to eternity, if she lives with a heretic. She refuses to let me take even one of my children. Now, if you were to talk to her; if you, speaking as a Catholic —"

"But why should the lady listen to me?"

"Because you speak Spanish. You see, in the Kingdom of Naples, the Spaniards are the rulers. She was brought up to despise people who speak Italian. When her parents married her to me, she obeyed me at first, but it went against the grain. Yet she loves me! She still writes that she loves me. It's from a sense of duty that she torments herself. She has consented to meet me here in Venice, but she says it's for the last time."

"Is this why you came to Venice again?" Marco asked him.

"Yes; I had to make one more attempt, in spite of the danger. I am to meet my wife tomorrow on the Lido. It's a good place; nobody goes there, except on Ascension Day. If you"—he turned to me—"will take the risk of coming with me . . . It is a risk; I must be honest with you; I am a marked man."

If I refused, then, I would seem a coward. We soon agreed at what landing stage we were to meet next day.

When Galeazzo had gone, Marco said to me: "Perhaps I should have prevented you from doing that."

"You think it's dangerous?"

"No. Galeazzo likes to make a parade of his danger. It's true that if he went back to Naples the Spaniards would put him in prison. But here in Venice he has enough powerful friends . . . He's a great-nephew of Caraffa—of our present Pope. The truth is, Tom, I don't know what the man is after."

"Not simply to make friends with his wife?"

"You heard how he spoke of his wife. Was there any love in his voice?"

I admitted I had not thought about that. "I felt sorry for the man," I said, "from the moment he said his wife kept Spanish priests. My mother had one; she always took his word against mine."

"But if he wants to plead with her in Spanish," Marco said, "he can do that for himself. I am sure he speaks it. All the noblemen do, in the Kingdom of Naples, else how would they speak to the Spanish Viceroy? Tom, it's as if he wanted you for a witness."

"I suppose it can do no harm to find out."

Marco agreed that it would do no harm. "I would not have let you give your word, if I thought there were any danger to you, Tom."

Only then did I remember that I might be in some other kind of danger. "There's a priest asking questions about me," I said. And I told him all my conversation with Miliella.

Marco, I now learned, knew that she was my mistress. His wife, who always went to Miliella for her dresses, had some time before observed that the woman could talk of nothing but me. Miliella had in the end admitted, with all the bewilderment of a woman hitherto chaste, that she had not been able to resist me.

"As for your danger," Marco said, "that depends on who it was that made the priest ask these questions. In any case, Tom, to have such a mistress—that's a danger to your soul."

"You don't need to tell me that, Marco."

"More than one kind of danger. When this woman said that the Jews drink the blood of Christian children, did you believe her?"

"Of course not."

"Then why did you not contradict her?"

"I didn't want to get entangled in an argument. She's too stupid."

"But you know, Tom, that if she goes on believing this, and goes on saying it, there will, sooner or later, be a child found murdered—these things happen—and then there will be a massacre of the Jews."

"But, Marco, the night your mother died, when that priest said much the same thing, you said nothing."

"I know. I reproach myself. I told myself then that I had no time to answer him. I was in a hurry to see my mother. But . . . What I ask myself now is—was I a coward? Do you think there is cowardice in your own actions, Tom?"

"Maybe. Well, of course there is. I don't want to say anything that silly woman can repeat."

"You see what I mean by danger to the soul."

"It can't go on, Marco. I know that. I shall have to leave her."

"Yes, Tom, but with gentleness! Give her a dowry so that she can marry again. As things are, you do not mean to marry her, and you are preventing her from finding a husband."

I said: "Then I'll go to Geneva."

"That does not follow."

"It does with me. I can't leave off my favourite sin, if I am living round the corner from my opportunity."

"There is opportunity everywhere," Marco said. "And in Geneva they punish the sin past all reason. Tom, you should be married."

"That's all right for you, Marco. You found the only woman with spirit in Italy. I've never seen an Italian girl who would starve herself to death to defy her father."

"Or an English girl?"

"That's more likely. But no! When I was in England last, the girls were a great disappointment to me. The only one I could fancy was Princess Elizabeth, and she's beyond my reach."

"Isn't there something in yourself," Marco asked, "which prevents you from desiring any girl you might marry? Haven't you, all your life, chosen women who were married already?"

"No, that's not it. Margaret was a virgin, God forgive me! Mostly they're widows."

"But of such a low class that you think you can't be expected to marry them."

"It's not that. I don't think it's that. If I *am* afraid of marriage, it's natural. My father had a wretched life, with a wife who didn't love him."

Marco said: "Perhaps it is time you made peace with your mother's ghost."

3

Amid the tombs and market gardens of the Lido, I hung back while Galeazzo met his wife. If they could be reconciled without me, I should be spared the task of giving advice to a lady I had never met. So I sat on a tombstone, scraping at the moss which covered some words about immortality. I looked up from time to time, to see the two distant figures moving warily to and fro, sometimes approaching each other, sometimes recoiling, never at rest. Why were they both wearing black? I knew Galeazzo affected the sober dress of Geneva, but why should his wife dress as though she were already a widow? I found it more pleasant to look at the landing stage, and watch the bright gondolas rocking on the bright water. Two priests waited in the shadow near the boats.

I heard a cry. I looked round and saw that Galeazzo was trying to take his wife in his arms. She broke away from him and ran towards the landing stage. Galeazzo came puffing after her, with a look of tragedy on his fat red face. The two priests moved out of the shadow.

Before they could reach her, I stepped in between. "Señora!" I cried out. "Wait! Consider what you are doing! Your marriage may be unhappy, but it was made before God."

Because I spoke in Spanish, the lady listened; Galeazzo had been right so far. But she soon recollected herself and asked: "Who are you? Another of his heretic friends?"

I assured her I was a Catholic. "Once I was secretary to a most pious Catholic lady, Queen Katherine of Aragon. She died loving and forgiving her husband, though he had abandoned her and declared their child a bastard. I am sure her confessor never told her that it was wrong to forgive human error."

"Human error!" exclaimed the lady. "Anyone can forgive that."

Her face, now that it was close to mine, looked so ugly, so jowled with obstinacy and ill temper, that I remembered Marco's

doubts. Could Galeazzo really want her back? But here he was, having caught up with her, pleading again. In fact, he went down on his knees.

"Victoria, I swear, if you come to Geneva, you shall have your own priest and your own chapel —"

He did indeed, as Marco had surmised, speak passable Spanish. But it did not pacify the lady.

"My own priest! You mean until he's murdered. I know what heretics are!"

I thought she was probably right. Some English Protestants had, to my knowledge, tried to kill priests as they celebrated Mass. I was silent, and left the rest of the pleading to Galeazzo.

"Victoria, at least let one of the children —"

That maddened her. "The children stay where they are! I'm not having them taught that rubbish." Though I had said nothing she suddenly turned on me. "Your Queen Katherine was abandoned for another woman. But to be abandoned for a dream, a notion, for some writing in a book —"

She broke away, and the priests helped her into the boat. I shed a tear or two as I saw her go. Stupid as she was, and ugly, it seemed hard that her life should be broken in pieces.

Galeazzo's eyes were dry. "You see?" he said, as we boarded our own gondola. In French, so that the gondolier would not understand, he added: "Was there anything more I could do?"

I said: "You could return to the Church."

I did not like the sound of his grating laugh. "Submit? Recant everything I've ever said? Let me assure you that, even if I grovelled, I should not live long. I should be told that my conversion was not sincere, and burned as a relapsed heretic. The Pope is my great-uncle, and he hates me. My friends tell me he's been protesting to the Venetian ambassador in Rome, because the Venetians turn a blind eye to my comings and goings. He said they were not to think of my being his nephew. In fact, my friends tell me that he said: 'If our father himself were a heretic, we should carry the faggots to burn him.'"

Once again I was reduced to silence. I had known Caraffa before he was Pope, and I could believe anything of the treacherous, violent old man.

I felt a fool for having taken part in this attempt at recon-

ciliation. There was probably no place in the Christian world where these two could live together in safety.

"I shall not stay in Venice one day longer," Galeazzo said. "I have urgent business in Geneva. But please, please come to see me there!"

I said: "Maybe."

"No! Say—for certain. Let's make the arrangements now, today. You'll need a false passport."

"What for?" I asked. "I can travel through all Catholic countries. I have a passport signed by Cardinal Pole."

"How on earth did you come by that?"

"Since I had saved the Cardinal's life in the past, he was persuaded to show me some consideration."

"Then you can go the quickest way, over the Little St. Bernard Pass, and through Savoy. I shall have to take . . . another path. But I may be there before you, for all that. When you come to the frontier of Geneva, don't show your Cardinal's signature; that won't help you. Only ask for me. And remember—come well before harvest! That's the time of year for weddings."

I thought it unlikely I should come at all. So I gave him a letter for Timothy, saying briefly that the £90 was his to keep, with my blessing. Since he might soon want some of it for his journey back to England, I sent him a bag of gold Venetian ducats, which are good currency all over Europe. I did not address or sign the letter, for fear Galeazzo might be arrested. Despite his talk of his own danger, he seemed reckless. When we came into Venice, in broad daylight, he let me see which house he was living in. As we parted he shook my hand warmly, thanking me for all I had done. I did not understand either his gratitude or his cheerfulness.

That evening, as I was going home with Marco, two very courteous gentlemen asked me to go with them instead. They wore the badge of the Pope's Nuncio, Cardinal della Casa. He wanted a few words with me, they murmured. His gondola was waiting.

Marco said quickly in English: "Don't look so pale, Tom! He has no legal power to arrest you or put you on the rack. If you don't return by morning I shall go to the Doge."

I wished (as the Cardinal's gondola carried me smoothly

along) that Marco had not mentioned the rack. It is not legal in England, either, but it is used. And though people have been known to hold their tongues in the extremity of torture, they are people who cling passionately to some faith. Could I refrain from betraying Galeazzo, whose faith I did not share? The man had no claim to my silence but that he had trusted me, and that I was a gentleman.

The faces of the Cardinal's men showed me nothing, beyond their politeness. I dared not ask them anything, for fear they should observe the dryness in my throat.

Once I was in the presence of Cardinal della Casa, I felt much braver. It was all familiar. The red robe, the splendid room on the first floor, the view over the Grand Canal . . . I might have been, once again, secretary to Cardinal Pole. Only the man in the red robe was different, and I thought he could not be more inflexible than Pole. His face was the face of a nobleman—haughty, and cold, but a face I could understand.

When I had made the proper obeisances, he invited me to sit down. He even offered me wine. I took only a sip, because my stomach was empty, and I wanted to keep a clear head.

His first question was: "How long have you known Marco Rafael?"

"More than twenty-five years, Monsignore. I met him when he came to the court of King Henry the Eighth."

"Ah! He was helping King Henry to prepare his case against the Church."

"That was what the King hoped," I said. "But in fact what happened was that Marco interpreted the Hebrew texts in a way most unpleasing to the King."

"And where did you meet him again?"

"Here, Monsignore, in Venice."

The Cardinal asked me how I came to speak Italian so well. I said I had lived in Italy for thirteen years, as secretary to Cardinal Pole.

"Did you," he asked, "return to England with Cardinal Pole, four years ago?"

"Yes, Monsignore."

"But now you're back in Venice. Why?"

I paused. The story was now so well known that I had no hope

of telling a lie. Could I possibly tell the truth in such a way that it would please a Papal Nuncio?

"Perhaps," he suggested, "the matter is too shameful to disclose."

I thought I saw a way to win him over.

"Monsignore, I have a bastard son. When he was in trouble —in fact, under sentence of death—I begged Cardinal Pole to reprieve him. But the Cardinal has a great hatred of anything that looks like nepotism."

I had hit the right note. Della Casa smiled for the first time. "Yes, we all know that particular bee in Pole's bonnet. Nepotism! So he executed your son."

"No, Monsignore. I dressed the young man in my own clothes, and took his place in prison."

"And the guards thought he was you?"

"Not for a moment. They were laughing up their sleeves. But they turned a blind eye and let the lad escape, because they thought the Cardinal owed me that favour."

This pleased the Nuncio. He murmured: "So Pole was taught that men could not be prevented from looking after their own!" Then he asked, quite pleasantly: "Where is your son at present?"

He has read my letter, I thought. He has captured Galeazzo with my letter on him. It was useless to leave it unsigned; since it was in English it must be known as mine. If I say I know nothing I shall be put on the rack.

Yet I said I did not know where my son had gone. To my surprise he went on to other matters.

"On what terms, then, did Cardinal Pole set you at liberty?"

The phrase "on what terms" puzzled me, so that I faltered. He asked brusquely: "Why did he let you go?"

"Monsignore, he could not execute me for heresy, because I am not a heretic. I could have been tried for helping a prisoner to escape, but then the matter would have become public. I believe Cardinal Pole had some reason for not wanting that."

Here I stopped, not liking to say what was still known to very few people—that Cardinal Pole, the burner of heretics, had himself been accused of heresy by the savage old Pope. I could see by the Nuncio's face that he knew this. All he said was: "Then he let you go!"

"Yes, Monsignore. And then, to prevent any scandal, he released the twenty-one other heretics who had been in prison with my son. It was given out that they had recanted, although in fact they had not."

"I see! But then Cardinal Pole has rather a weakness for heretics."

"Indeed no, Monsignore!"

"He was a great friend of Cardinal Morone, who is now in prison."

"But Cardinal Pole has burned several more heretics since I left."

"And what," asked the Nuncio, "do *you* think of burning heretics?"

"I can speak only of England," I said cautiously. "The people who have been burned were simple, ignorant souls, who never learned the art of telling lies. And the common people, who at first hated the Protestants, have now come to admire them for their courage. What perhaps is even more dangerous—they despise the nobility and gentry, as cowards. Because the powerful enemies of the Church have conformed. But it's only an outward conformity."

"One keeps hearing this argument . . ." murmured the Nuncio. "As if an outward conformity did not matter! It means at least that the children are properly instructed. If we could make all Italy conform in appearance for one generation, then in the next generation the conformity would be real. However! It seems that in this you disagree with King Philip and Queen Mary."

"They did not ask my opinion."

"Yet they gave you a passport to go abroad. I suppose you are not travelling without a passport?"

"Here it is, Monsignore."

He examined it. "Signed by Cardinal Pole. On what terms, then, did he let you go?"

"Only that I should not make the matter public. And that I should get out of his sight."

The Nuncio smiled. "And it did not occur to you that in coming here, and lodging with Marco Rafael, you would expose yourself to some very unpleasant suspicions?"

"In what way, Monsignore?"

"Well, there are people who think you must be spying for the English. On what other terms, they ask, would Cardinal Pole have set you free?"

"On my faith —"

"And then, you have been known to give away gold coins as if they were silver, which leads people to suspect that you have the art of turning one into the other."

"Venice has that art, Monsignore. By investing money in Venetian enterprises, I have certainly become richer than I was."

"You have no objection, then, to usury."

"Forgive me, Monsignore, if what I have done is usury. I do not think I have broken the laws of Venice."

"Oh, the laws of Venice! They have a saying here: 'Venetians first, and Christians afterwards.'"

"But surely, Monsignore, you do not think I am an alchemist, or a spy."

He laughed. "No, Signor Vaughan, I don't think that's what you are. Why, you look pale! Forgive me; I should have offered you some refreshment."

He rang a bell, and a servant appeared with biscuits and wine on a tray. I was hungry, but when I tasted one of the biscuits I found that it was smeared with a salty mixture. I hesitated, remembering how my first master, Thomas Cromwell, used to serve people he suspected with spicy food, so that they would become thirsty and drink too much wine. The Nuncio said sharply: "Do you find it distasteful?"

"It's delicious, Monsignore, but my throat is dry."

He poured me some wine and went on watching me. I sipped the wine and finished the biscuit, but refused to eat more. He said: "So you think it's *trifa*?"

Not understanding, I murmured that the food was indeed delicious, and if only I had been hungry . . .

"You mean, if only it had not been *trifa*!"

"Monsignore, you were pleased to compliment me on my Italian, but I confess I don't understand . . ."

"*Trifa* is not an Italian word, as you very well know."

I still stared. "Come, come!" he said. "If you won't admit you know that word, you certainly understand Spanish."

I admitted I did, thinking: Now comes the question about what I said on the Lido.

Instead, he burst out: "You spent long enough talking to Marco Rafael's mother!"

I had been so intent on the wrong tack that I had not, until that instant, thought why he was offering me a pounded mixture of pork and ham.

"How could you hope to deceive me?" the Nuncio was saying. "You may have deceived Cardinal Pole all these years. But when I see a face like yours, a complexion—and you admit you speak Spanish! I suppose you are going to tell me you spent many years in Spain."

"I have never set foot there," I said. "I learned Spanish from my mother."

"Just as Marco Rafael did!"

"My mother," I went on, "was Beatriz de Ribera, lady-in-waiting to Katherine of Aragon."

He sprang to his feet. "How dare you! How dare you claim kinship with —"

And then he hesitated. I saw some doubt come into his face. I knelt down at once, and said: "As a Catholic gentleman, I am willing to swear on the Sacrament that this is true."

"A gentleman!" said the Nuncio. "There! That gives you away! If you came of the Ribera family, you would be a nobleman."

I said: "My mother made a runaway marriage with a poor country squire, and her family cast her off."

"Ran away—from the service of a Queen?"

"Katherine of Aragon was not then a Queen. This was in the time of King Henry the Seventh, who was famous for his mean and grasping ways. Though Katherine was the widow of his eldest son, he would not let her have money, and she could not give dowries to her ladies. Their families would not send them dowries either, because they had already spent large sums to place the girls in Katherine's household. So they could not marry anyone. They lived a wretched, penniless life, quarrelling among themselves. After seven years of this my mother ran away with the first man who would take her without a dowry. Two months later the old King died. Henry the Eighth married Katherine and

showered her ladies with money; they were all able to find husbands of their own rank."

"Except your mother."

"Except my mother, who reproached my father, every day, with her lost opportunity."

I could see he believed me now. He was much older than I was; he must remember when the old King's parsimony was the scandal of Europe. Yet he still seemed puzzled.

"Have you never tried to seek out your Spanish kinsmen?" he asked.

"Never! My mother's brothers wrote to her in such terms that my father put the letter in the fire. I believe they called her a whore. Why should I seek out such people?"

"You must remember that they felt themselves disgraced," the Nuncio said. "To be shamed by a sister's conduct—that *is* enough to make a man forget himself. Like poor Cardinal d'Aragona—but that was before your time. My dear Signor Vaughan, why are you still on your knees? Sit down, sit down! Have more wine! And tell me, is the new Viceroy your first or second cousin?"

"New Viceroy, Monsignore?"

"I thought you could not know. I have only just heard of it myself. King Philip has appointed Don Perafán de Ribera, Duke of Alcalá, to be his Viceroy in the Kingdom of Naples."

I thought for a moment, as I ate the ham-spread biscuits. "The old Duke of Alcalá was my mother's brother. Yes, this must be my first cousin."

"Well, well! So perhaps Naples will be your next resting place."

I said I would not thrust myself on a kinsman who did not want me.

"I hope," said the Nuncio, "that you are not infected with Pole's views on nepotism. Any man of honour, who cares for his own good name, will do what he can to help his relations. And it's not as if you would be going to him a beggar. You admit you've made money here. Think what you could do in Naples! Why, Signor Vaughan! It's time you remembered your noble blood. You should learn from your mother's sad experience not to associate with inferiors. Why bring trouble and suspicion on yourself by lodging with Marco Rafael?"

"He's my friend."

"That's the cunning of Jews! They make people like them! Even unconverted Jews – they trade with Christians, and the next thing you know is, people are telling you: 'We all pray to the same God!' Now it's come to this – they've almost persuaded the Doge to their diabolical scheme. Every unconverted Jew in Venice will agree to wear a yellow hat, and this is to be the sign that he should not be approached – 'pestered' as they say – by priests. And the priests will be forbidden to go into the Ghetto. You understand? We'll have to give up every attempt to convert them. My dear Signor Vaughan, you have no notion of the trouble the Jews caused in Spain. Pretending to be converted . . . They didn't even circumcise their sons; we couldn't catch them that way. Some of them became Bishops, even Archbishops. And still they said their Hebrew prayers in secret. The Spaniards can put a stop to these things, because they have a real Inquisition. You can't call what we have here an Inquisition. No powers of arrest, no putting to the question —"

He broke off, and looked at me sharply. "Signor Vaughan, has Marco Rafael ever tried to teach you Hebrew?"

"Never."

"Or said any Hebrew prayers in your hearing?"

"No."

"Then what happened when you went with him into the Ghetto?"

A liar needs a good memory. What was it I had said to that priest at the time? "We both tried to persuade Marco's mother to become a Christian."

"Then why did Marco insist on leaving the priest outside?"

"I insisted on that, Monsignore. The priest could not speak Spanish, and I thought he would be worse than useless."

"But your own efforts were useless."

"That was not my fault. I did my best. We both did our best."

"And did the Jews do anything to hinder this conversion?"

"No, Monsignore. They were silent. When the old woman died they began to wail, and we left."

"In view of your noble blood," said the Nuncio, "I do not, of course, doubt your word. But . . . for the sake of the report I shall

be making to His Holiness, I would like you to swear on the Sacrament that everything you have told me is true."

With a calm face, looking him in the eye, I swore.

"And now," said the Nuncio, "I hope that you will be my guest at supper."

For the first time since I left Cardinal Pole, I went to supper in a noble hall, with musicians playing and servants bowing to me. But, whereas Cardinal Pole used to say Grace, this man was too great to say his own prayers. Two chaplains with good voices did it for him, intoning a long and musical Grace, making responses to each other as if in church. The only trouble the Nuncio gave himself was to join in the final "Amen".

The food was far more varied and rich than Cardinal Pole could afford. (He never took bribes.) I praised the delicate sauces, the wine, the music, the paintings by Tiziano . . . The Nuncio became every moment more friendly. He began to talk about the splendid post to which my cousin had been appointed. "It means he is absolute ruler of all Southern Italy. King Philip will scarcely interfere. His Majesty has enough to keep him busy, in England and Spain and the Netherlands—not to mention the Spanish colonies in America. Why, Signor Vaughan, if you enter your cousin's service, what a prospect for you! What a change from the wretched life you've been leading!" Still in a friendly spirit, he wagged his finger at me. "Ah, you simple, simple souls who think the Jews are harmless! What are you going to say the next time a Christian child is found murdered?"

If I let this pass I should not be able to look Marco in the face.

"Monsignore," I said, "surely that story has been denounced as a fable by several Popes."

"You see!" said the Nuncio. "That shows the cunning of the Jews. They can even throw dust in the eyes of a Pope."

Still friendly, he sent me home in one of his own gondolas. Neither Marco nor Giulietta had gone to bed. As I came in they rushed to me, seizing my hands, overwhelming me with questions.

I said: "My dear, dear friends, I would rather confess to you than to a priest. Tell me whether I shall go to Hell! I have sworn to a lie on the Sacrament." I told them how and why.

"And your own conscience?" Marco said. "Does that tell you it was wrong to swear?"

"My conscience is a child. It does nothing but repeat what boys tell each other in England. 'Ask a silly question, and you'll hear a silly answer.' If that man thinks it's the task of a good Christian to torment a poor old woman on her deathbed, let him think so."

Marco said something I could not catch.

"What's that?" I asked.

"I do relapse into Hebrew sometimes," he said. "That's the prayer of thanksgiving, because God confounded the Jews' foe, Haman."

Gudula sank to her knees. To pray, I thought. But she bent her head before me, and kissed my feet.

4

The important thing was not to run away. Above all, not to Geneva. So I let it be known that I was going to my own Catholic country, England. I said I was hoping to make my peace with Cardinal Pole. That seemed possible to people who did not know him. I let my beard grow, and when people laughed at the bristle I said that in the crossing of the Alps it was often difficult to find hot water for shaving. I could not at once call in all the money I had lent, but I arranged that it should be paid into my account at the Banca Giro. Then I took out my savings. What I thought I would need for the journey I kept in my money belt. With the rest, I bought a gold cross richly studded with diamonds, and wore it round my neck, under my clothes. I also bought a pistol.

When I was almost ready to set out, a letter came from Mantua, signed "Michael Throgmorton". Michael did not explain why he should be in Italy—a country where he had spent so many years, without once feeling at home. He only expressed a great desire to see me.

I showed this letter—or, rather, the signature, for the letter itself was in English—to everyone who might report it to the Nuncio. I explained that Michael Throgmorton was a well-born gentleman, the steward of Cardinal Pole's household, often entrusted with important messages. I hinted that he must have come to ask me to return.

Then I wondered—could that be true? Did the Cardinal want me back? The thought made me shiver with disgust.

Where in the world, then, did I want to go? Once I had seen Timothy married, I would have no reason to stay in Geneva. Would I really have the impudence to go to Naples, to ask favours of this cousin I had never seen?

"You might do well enough there," Marco said. "This new Spanish Viceroy may be better than the old one. He can hardly be

worse. The old Viceroy expelled the Jews on the pretext that they lent money at high rates of interest. Then he found that the Neapolitans could not live without borrowing. So he set up a pawnshop run by monks, called the Mount of Piety. The monks were so often cheated that they lost money on the business. What could they do but raise the rates of interest? Now they're charging more than the Jews ever did."

The truth was, I did not want to be anywhere but Venice. Perhaps I was "Venetian first and Christian afterwards". To be a Venetian was to be more civilised than anyone who had lived since the end of the Roman Empire. This was the only place in Europe where men walked about without their swords. These were people who traded with all nations, who tolerated all religions, who made war powerfully and peace with cunning.

But Venice was growing weaker. I knew from the gossiping merchants that Galeazzo was right there. He might also be right in foretelling more executions of heretics. For the safety of Marco, and myself, I dared not come back after visiting Geneva.

At least I should be free of my mistress. When I knew for certain that she was not pregnant, this was clearly the time to say farewell. But I left it a few days longer, so that I could arrange a letter of credit for her. (Gold coins, I thought, she might find insulting.)

When I next came to her door, she was standing on the threshold, swinging a flat-iron to and fro to disperse the fumes from the hot charcoal inside. She brought the iron in and set it down, but forgot to do her ironing. Instead, she put her arms around my neck, and whispered happily that she was well. I unwound her arms, and began to explain, very gently, that I must go away. It was all for the best, I said. What we had done was bad for both our souls; it was time we parted. She did not contradict; she only pressed her body against mine, and sobbed. In the midst of my most pious exhortations, I found that I was taking off her clothes.

We said our farewells in bed, and said them again on three successive nights. She did not beg me to stay, or take her with me; it was when I told her to look for a good husband that she sobbed and cried.

"You think I'm a whore!" she said. "You think one man is the same as another to me."

"Not now," I said, "but in time . . ."

"Oh no! Not in any time! Not up till the end of the world! You've made all the other men look so dull and stupid. There's nobody who laughs at me like you do. The way your eyes go narrow, and your lips twitch, when you think I'm talking nonsense . . . And then I have to laugh too, because I know I'm silly. What else could I be? I've never been educated. You should have taught me to read, and then I'd be learned and sensible. Tomà, why didn't you ever teach me to read?"

My laughing answer died upon my lips. But, as if I had said it aloud, she cried out: "You don't want me to be a human soul!"

When we did at last say our final farewell, and I made her take the letter of credit, I did not say that it was for a dowry. I said: "It's to pay for reading lessons, and books."

"Oh, Tomà! If I grow very learned, will you come back to me?"

I could do nothing but shake my head. Still she did not plead; only her body shivered, and then lay limp, as if I had killed her.

Marco came with me as far as the mainland, and helped me to buy a good horse. There are horses in Venice, but they are small, slow creatures, trained to pick their way over the little bridges, and through the alleys. All over Italy, if they see a man riding badly, they say he's a Venetian. When I found myself, after much bargaining, the master of a beautiful white mare, I felt that I had cut my last link with Venice.

"Watch your step in Geneva," Marco said. "And give my greetings to Federico Bologna. I suppose he is happy there. They've closed the brothels, and he always wanted that done here. You see, Tom, he was head of the pox hospital for women. He was always looking for a cure for the pox, but he swore he hadn't found one. That made the other doctors angry, because they make fortunes by pretended cures. He said the only way to prevent the pox from spreading was for men to stop treating women as merchandise. People used to jeer at him and say he talked like that because he was afraid of his own mistress. He had a shrew of a woman who kept house for him, and bullied him almost to death. He used to come to our house for peace

and quiet. Then the woman ran away with another man, taking everything she could lay hands on. And you know what troubled him? That she had not taken enough. He said this other man was an idle fellow, who would never be able to keep her in comfort. You see it was easy for people to call him a fool. When I said farewell to him sixteen years ago, on this very spot, I thought Venice would be poorer without such a fool. It will be poorer—or, at least, more dull—without such a sinner as you."

We embraced. I thought of the four stone warriors, from some unknown country, who stand outside one corner of St. Mark's. I have always fancied that they were on the tower of a beleaguered city, and were watching the approach of an innumerable Tartar horde. What could they do, except embrace one another, and say farewell?

"When you see Federico Bologna," Marco said, "ask him to tell you the story of his life. It's well worth hearing."

I was already on my horse when he made a sign that he had something to whisper. I bent down as far as I could. He said: "If you can find a way to send a letter safely, tell me what it really is like in Geneva. Tell me whether Federico Bologna is happy there!"

Only then did I remember what I wanted him to do for me. I said: "Miliella can't write. But perhaps your wife can find out—that is, in a month or so—whether she's pregnant . . . For God's sake, Marco, as soon as it's certain, one way or the other, write to me by way of Galeazzo, in Geneva."

Marco asked: "And if she is pregnant?"

I shrugged my shoulders. I would rather not think . . .

The merchants in whose company I travelled told me jokes and bawdy stories. I laughed, and told some in my turn. But it seemed to me that our laughter was all a sham, a denial of a known guilt.

I asked the merchants whether they had heard of Federico Bologna. They shook their heads. But then one of them remembered.

"Yes! The mad pox doctor! He was lucky to get away, before someone threw him into a canal."

"What for?" I asked.

"Why—for saying he couldn't cure the pox. What sort of a

doctor was he? I could go about in a long robe, not curing the pox. What's more, he said—he said this openly—he couldn't even cure the clap. That's a poor look-out for us all, if the clap isn't curable."

The man who said this was the oldest of our party, and, in the fashion of old men, was at every inn the one who sat longest at the table, and drank most heavily. Near the Venetian frontier, at Nogara, the inn where we stayed was near a famous brothel. The old man said: "Aren't you coming round the corner for . . .?" He used the sailors' word, *chiavare*, which in its proper meaning is to knock a nail in, or put a key in a lock.

I said: "I did too much of that in Venice." He laughed, and I was at once ashamed, both of his laughter and my boasting. (What we say we believe is one thing, but in practice we would rather other men thought us damned than chaste.) Was I, like this old sinner, becoming more gross and greedy with age? In my youth I had seduced women without scruple, and yet, if a girl resisted, I had the patience to woo her with presents and sweet words. My wooing of Miliella had been short. What I had said, what she had said in reply, I could not now remember, six months afterwards. (Was it six months? I could not even be sure of that.) It had not seemed important, so long as I got my way. "You don't want me to be a human soul."

The next morning, when we left Venetian soil, we all stopped to unpack our swords and pistols, and buckle them on. The rule of law lay behind us; ahead was the rest of Italy.

The frontier guards of the Dukedom of Mantua treated me courteously, because of the passport signed by Cardinal Pole. He was well remembered there, having been several times a guest of their own Cardinal. And when I came to the gate of the city itself, the guards told me, before I asked them, where I could find my fellow-countryman, Michael.

Mantua is almost as watery as Venice. Lakes lie about it on three sides, and the side left undefended by nature is protected by a moat. Yet the city has been forced to build huge walls, with towering battlements; and instead of the wide-windowed palace which the Doge can afford, the Duke of Mantua lives in a great glowering castle. I passed an iron cage protruding from a tower. In the cage a condemned prisoner was exposed to the midday

sun. He shouted curses at me, or rather at all passers-by who were still free to walk in the shade.

At almost the next turning I found Michael. He called to me from a balcony, and then came running to open the door of his house. When we had embraced, and a servant had taken my horse, I made to go inside. But Michael, with a little half-smile, said: "Tom, wait! I have something to tell you . . . Nobody can understand us here."

So we sat in the portico, while Michael said: "The truth is, I'm very busy dying."

I cried out in disbelief. His fair hair glittered, certainly, with white. But his face . . . His face looked well because it was deeply sunburned. Only lips do not change colour in the sun, and his lips had a blue tinge.

"You remember," Michael said, "that second time the Queen thought she was pregnant? There was one doctor who said it was not pregnancy, but a dangerous disease. I reckon he knows his trade. He was the one the Cardinal sent for, when I started swooning like a woman. He listened to my heart; he said it was trying to flutter out of its cage. He gave me a drug made from foxgloves, and said I might live a year. So I wanted to put the things right that I did wrong."

"Why, Michael! What wrong did you ever do?"

"You know very well, Tom, when we lived in Viterbo, I had a mistress there. Well, so did you, but my Graziella gave me two boys. Don't smile! I know they're mine, because her husband was impotent. If he'd been impotent at the time of the marriage, it could have been annulled, but this was a sickness that came afterwards. You know what Italians are, Tom; rather than let his neighbours guess his trouble, he pretended to think the boys were his. And of course I paid for their schooling and their keep. He seemed not to care, and yet, now and again, he'd fly into a rage and threaten to stick one of his cobbler's tools into Graziella's heart. I was always afraid . . . But then, suddenly, in the midst of one of his rages, he fell down dead. Graziella wrote and told me. I was back in England by then, so what could I do? I sent her money so that she could keep the boys at school. But . . . money wasn't enough. When that old sawbones told me I was dying, I knew it wasn't enough. I spoke to the Cardinal, and he

agreed I ought to put things right. He wrote to his friend, the Cardinal of Mantua, who sold me this house. It's a good place, you see; more than two hundred miles from Viterbo, so the people don't know Graziella, and accept her simply as my wife."

"Then you're married!"

"If you're going to tell me it's beneath me —"

I laughed, and embraced him. He went on, a little breathless: "Because that's what my kinsfolk said. That's why I couldn't bring Graziella to England. She wouldn't be welcome. My kinsfolk are heretics, anyway! I told them—and the Cardinal agreed—the only thing that's really beneath a gentleman is to die without making amends. That's one reason why I wanted to see you, Tom. If I've ever in my life done you any harm —"

"Michael!"

"There might be something I didn't remember."

"I'm the one with a bad memory," I said. "I haven't thanked you yet for pleading with the Cardinal. He might have put me to death, if it hadn't been for you."

"I'm afraid I couldn't persuade him to revoke your exile. Just before I left, I said to him: 'My Lord, if I should see Tom Vaughan in Italy, is there any message from you?' And the Cardinal said: 'Michael, you have my blessing. You've served me faithfully these five and twenty years; you've been by my side when assassins were trying to kill me; you've carried my most perilous messages. Now do me one more service. Stop talking about Mr. Vaughan!'"

I laughed. My spirits were lightened. The way back, at least, was closed.

And now Michael brought me into his house, feeling that he had done enough to prepare me, or, perhaps, given his wife enough time to prepare herself.

She met us with downcast eyes. It seemed to fluster her that I bowed, and called her "Signora". Michael prompted her to put her hand out, and I reverently kissed it.

I recognised her. She used to come to the servants' gate of the palace at Viterbo, not, I think, to do the washing, but to mend the washing when it was done. In those days her shyness enhanced her plebeian beauty. Now that the beauty was gone, the shyness was only awkward, like her new clothes.

Michael told her, in his curious Italian: "Signor Vaughan would like to see the boys."

She led us to a room where two half-grown lads were sitting with their tutor. They all three got up from their books, to bow to us. Michael had not been deceived. The boys, though they had their mother's dark hair, looked at me with gentle, candid faces, the spit of his.

"I have adopted them," whispered Michael, as we went into dinner. "So now they are legally mine."

I was glad to see that he held to the English custom of making his wife sit with us at table. She glanced at me shyly, evidently not knowing what to say. I asked her if she had found it a hard journey from Viterbo.

"*Il signore* —" she corrected herself. "*Mio marito* . . ."

Clearly she still thought of Michael as "the gentleman", not as her husband. I encouraged her to talk, and she told me the dangers of the journey. How many times she and the boys would have been robbed or murdered, if Michael had not been there!

"I could not have protected them by myself," Michael said. "We joined a Bishop, travelling from Rome, and kept close to his bodyguard. We needed them. Nothing on the roads but armies and stragglers from armies—wounded soldiers robbing to get home. And then the peasants whose crops have been trampled and ruined . . . Italy's in a worse way than ever it was."

"Is all this travelling good for your heart?" I asked.

"We went very slowly. You know how Bishops travel. It suited me; I can't gallop nowadays." He smiled. "I don't want to gallop anywhere. I never want to be in any place, but where I am."

Indeed, as he sat gazing at his two sons, he looked as if prepared for a long, contented life. "I've been teaching them English," he said. "Do you understand me, Renaldo?" He turned to the elder boy. "When this house is yours, I want you to seek out every Englishman who comes to Mantua, and make him welcome here."

The boy answered in English: "Yes, Father." I saw how Michael smiled at that, and, though he was about to die, I envied him.

After dinner, when we were alone, Michael asked me: "Are you ever homesick?"

"For England? Sometimes. But when I was there last, I wasn't happy."

"Yes, isn't it strange? I never thought I'd settle outside England. But . . . I don't like it now. I don't like what's happening there. The Queen's dying, Tom, and she's dying almost alone. Only the Cardinal keeps her company, and he's ill himself. She goes on begging King Philip to come back from Brussels. But of course he never will, since there's no hope of a child. And the courtiers are leaving her one by one. They slip away to Hatfield, to pay court to Elizabeth. She's a heretic; everybody knows that. Everybody but King Philip! He's got it into his head that once he makes his peace with the Pope, the Pope will give a dispensation for Elizabeth to be Queen, although she's a bastard. And then she'll be so grateful that she'll keep England Catholic. I don't believe it, Tom. You know how those heretics wrecked the churches in Edward's time. They mean to do it again, and I don't want to be there. I want to die in a Catholic place, with a real priest by my bed."

That evening he took me out to walk on the city ramparts. As we passed the prisoner exposed in the cage, Michael looked up and said: "There are still things I hate in Italy, and that's one of them."

The prisoner had stopped cursing, and now sat on the cage floor, clasping his knees.

"We have some cruel punishments in England," I said.

"But only for heresy or treason!"

"What did this man do?" I asked.

Michael did not know. So I shouted up to the prisoner: "*Cosa hai fatto?*" He spat.

A passer-by explained. "*Ha chiavato sua sorella.*"

"His sister!" Michael exclaimed, crossing himself. He added: "There's another thing I hate—that word *chiavare*. As if a woman were a thing you knocked nails into, like a coffin!"

"What became of the sister?" I asked the Italian.

"Oh, she's already been burned."

As we stood on the city walls, looking northwards across the lake to the distant Alps, I told Michael I was going to Geneva. He

was horrified, and said: "Can't you persuade your son to marry a Catholic?"

"But, Michael, he wouldn't be happy. People have to live as it suits them."

"You sound like a heretic."

"Like a Venetian," I said. Then I shocked him still more by telling him that I had set out on this journey without confessing and receiving the Sacrament.

"Tom! Suppose you're murdered on the way!"

I admitted that I was afraid of dying in a state of mortal sin. But I had been even more afraid of confessing within Venetian territory, because the Nuncio might find out what I had confessed.

"That's impossible," Michael said. "Priests never betray the secrets of the confessional. It's only a tale put about by the heretics. That is . . . You'd surely be safe to confess here."

The next morning, in the Duomo, I found an old priest with a face as lined as the Alps. Indeed, I might have been talking to the Alps, as I went through my sins. Swearing, the telling of unseemly stories, fornication . . . Not a wrinkle moved. At last I said: "I swore to a lie on the Blessed Sacrament."

The Alps were shaken. The wrinkles became chasms. In a thunderous whisper the old man asked for the details. I said: "The Papal Nuncio to Venice, Cardinal della Casa, questioned me about my friends."

"Della Casa! You told a lie to Cardinal della Casa! My son, why didn't you say so at once? You had it in mind, no doubt, to avoid a greater evil . . . Six paternosters, twelve aves . . ."

With such a light penance, the old man absolved me. To be reckoned a good Catholic in any Italian state, it is enough to be an enemy of the good Catholics in the neighbouring state. Not for the first time, I wondered at the consolations of my religion.

The three weeks I stayed in Mantua passed busily. Michael's preparations for dying took up nearly all his time. Since he had been steward of the Cardinal's household, he knew how to control his own servants. But he had to teach this art to Graziella, who would rather have scrubbed the flagstones herself than tell her maids to do it. Patiently, she learned to add up the accounts every night, and go round the kitchen every morning, to see what

food was missing. What threw her into a panic was an invitation to a rich wedding, where there would be dancing.

Here I took a hand. In Italy every peasant can dance, and I did not find it hard to teach her the Morisco and the Pavane. "You are as graceful as your name," I said. How strange it is when a woman battered by time looks at you suddenly with a pure, youthful smile!

Graziella had, besides, a pretty singing voice. When the boys' music master came I persuaded her to sing, while he played the lute. She was quick in learning new songs, and began, I think, to dread less the fate of being a gentlewoman.

Every morning, when the boys rode out to practise horsemanship, I rode with them, and shared Michael's delight in their skill. They had another exercise, which in Italy is reckoned essential to a gentleman—swimming. I was glad to join in their lessons, because I had learned the art only when I was a grown man, and still did it clumsily. Michael's doctor had forbidden him to plunge into cold water; he would sit on the bank of the lake. Naked in the sunlit water, looking at fields of green, growing wheat, I could think myself Adam in Eden. I liked the thought, and swam back to share it with Michael. But he was not looking at me. His eyes were fixed on his boys, as they raced each other, dipping and swooping in the water like swallows in the air. This was the picture he meant to take with him into eternity.

Once, when I was alone with Graziella, she asked me: "Do you believe in doctors?"

"I believe in keeping myself out of their hands."

She circled round the matter a little more. "Don't you think Michael is looking well?"

"Very well. And happier than I've ever known him."

She burst out: "I can't believe it! I can't believe that God will let him die. Not now that we're so happy."

While I was wondering how to answer her, she answered herself. "God may mean to punish us, for being too happy. Because I'm so ashamed, sometimes! I think of my husband—of my first husband. Always fretting because of what he couldn't help. Poor man, it was no wonder he grew cross-grained. And then to die so suddenly, without a priest! He suffered so much . . . Do you think that God is making him suffer now?"

I answered in Marco's words: "If I believed that of God, I could not worship Him."

She was comforted, being too simple to ask if this were heresy. But presently she said: "If Michael dies, and my sons are learned men, whatever shall I do for company?"

The question echoed in my mind when I rode out of Mantua. Michael was weeping as he said farewell. "Tom, you have helped me so much!"

"Helped you? How?"

"By treating my wife *as* my wife. To know that one friend at least understands what I've done—that gives me more courage to make a good end. But, oh, Tom, I wish you were not going to Geneva! I shall think of you as lost in the dark."

I embraced him, and thought once more of the stone warriors outside St. Mark's.

I had joined another party of merchants, for protection. But what was I to do for company?

The summer was not far advanced. The flat fields round me were still green. But as I rode on, day after day, I saw the Alps always waiting on my right hand. Then they stood in my path, and at last all round, rising one behind the other, hoary-headed as old age.

5

Could it really be so small, this place which "had no need of the sun" or was "lost in the dark", because of its religion? From a distance, Geneva looked so little, between the wide cornfields and the long lake, that I could not believe it was the hope and fear of our divided world.

As I came near I saw that it was fortified more heavily than Mantua. Round the city walls there was an open space without a single house. It looked as if it had been cleared for battle. Then I saw that there were a few houses at the place where the road crosses the River Arve, about a mile from the town. This was the frontier post. On the Savoyard side of the bridge the guards waved me on, hardly looking at my passport. But on the Genevan side two stern-faced men in steel breastplates crossed their pikes to keep me out.

I said: "Galeazzo Caracciolo will vouch for me. I believe you call him 'Monsieur le Marquis'. If you could send a message to him . . ."

"There is no need," said one of the pikemen. "Monsieur le Marquis is on his way here."

"Are you sure?" I asked.

They told me brusquely to wait at the inn. This inn, being on the Savoyard side of the bridge, had a shrine outside, with a statue of the Virgin. I bowed and crossed myself before it, and was glad that the pikemen could see me.

Inside, the landlady asked me whether I would order supper. I hesitated, not knowing how long it would be before Galeazzo arrived. Then I heard a voice from a back room, calling: *"Oui, Monsieur le Marquis!"*

Was Galeazzo there already? *"C'est le marquis italien?"* I asked the landlady. She said that it was indeed the Italian Marquis, and I asked impatiently to see him.

When I was ushered into the back room, I confronted a complete stranger.

"I am sorry!" I said in Italian. "I expected Galeazzo Caracciolo."

"And I am expecting Galeazzo!" replied the stranger. "I thought, when they said there was someone to see me . . ."

We introduced ourselves. The stranger was Gian Bernadino Bonifacio, Marquis of Oria. The landlady came to ask him if she might have a sketch of his coat of arms, and a crown for the craftsman who was to copy them.

"So you follow the German custom!" said the Marquis. "You want to put my arms outside your inn, to show I stayed here. But this craftsman of yours had better not make my unicorns into great clumsy carthorses."

The landlady assured him there was no fear of that. "Our man is the best artist in all Savoy."

The Marquis, laughing, gave her the sketch and the crown. "It's foolish, I know," he said when she had gone. "But I never can resist that particular compliment. I like to be reminded that I have at least the name of Oria, though the Pope has deprived me of the place."

If he had lost his estate, he had not lost all his money, to judge by the elegance of his dress. He was not, perhaps, much younger than myself, but very much more handsome, with features fit for Donatello. Yet I could not feel envious before his warm and friendly smile.

"What good luck, to meet an Englishman!" he said. "I am sure I shall visit England one day. Not under your present Queen, but . . . Signore, will you be my guest at supper?"

I thanked him, but doubted if I should have time to eat.

"What—before Galeazzo comes? There's time enough. He won't hurry. Giulia! Tisiphone!"

Two beautiful girls came out of the kitchen. They were better dressed, I thought, than ordinary servants.

"See that there's enough for my guest," said the Marquis. They nodded and curtseyed, but did not speak. To me he explained: "I never trust the cooking in these inns. I won't stay at a place, unless they let me send those two into the kitchen. I eat nothing but what they prepare."

I remarked that I had found the food very good in Savoy.

"Oh, so it may be, but I have this habit, because . . . The fact is,

there have been attempts to poison me. Besides other little trials. One way and another, I've had a tedious journey from Venice."

"From Venice! How is it I never saw you there?"

"I didn't go out much, except after nightfall. To be so careful, and then to be betrayed over a sordid little matter! A servant with a grudge . . . But I'll say this for Venice. If there's one man to denounce you to the Inquisition, there's half a dozen others to warn you in time."

Before he could say more, I warned him that I was not a Protestant.

"In that case we may be able to talk," he said. "If you were a Lutheran, and thought me a Calvinist—or the other way about—we should hardly find a civil word to say. And if you thought me an Anabaptist, you would by now be burning to denounce me. Burning would be the right word."

"When I was young," I said, "I followed the Church of old King Henry, who did indeed burn Protestants of other kinds. But surely that's the whole case against heresy? Honest people start by examining Christianity. They decide that it would be a good religion, if only they could clear away the nonsense. And then they find —"

"That the nonsense is the religion! And the religion is the nonsense."

"That's not what I was going to say!"

"But it's what you meant," he replied with a smile. "Isn't that what you call the case against heresy? Aren't you afraid that if you take away one part of your religion—the sale of indulgences, or the pretended celibacy of the clergy—the whole thing will unravel in your hands?"

"Unravel—or splinter. Once the unity of the Church is broken, what you have is not a nobler, purer Church, but a thousand fragments, unable to agree on one single point of belief."

"That's true," said the Marquis. "Where we differ is—I think that's the case *for* heresy."

"You want all this bitter quarrelling about religion?"

"Yes. I agree with Giacopo Aconcio—haven't you read his book? He contends that it is not for us to know any absolute truth. Our part is to search for it, and the truth is *in the searching*, because it is this ability to search which is the most divine thing in us. And

so that the search may be unimpeded, we need a general toleration of all opinions. Aconcio would like people everywhere to live as they live in Venice. Except that the Venetians tolerate what they think does not matter. They let the pious people talk while they get on with making money. It's a dead sort of toleration; it won't endure against the Nuncio's passion for persecution. In Aconcio's ideal city, they would tolerate the errors, not from indifference, but because the search for truth matters more than anything else."

"But it's a dream!" I said. "Is there any place on earth where they have this toleration?"

"Not in Germany, certainly, or among the Swiss. I've tried every one of the Protestant cities. Basle is the best. To hear the Basle people talk, you'd think their city was the one in the Book of Revelation, that had no need of the sun. I used to think so myself. But even Basle . . . They put a man on trial for saying that it was useless to pray out loud. The City Councillors told him Jesus prayed aloud in Gethsemane. He said: 'How do you know? The disciples were asleep.'"

"I suppose the City Councillors had an answer to that."

"Yes. They cut off his head. And then, last autumn, they seized some letters which convinced them that one of the Dutch exiles was a secret Anabaptist. The man had lived peacefully in their midst for years, practising every virtue. That was bad enough, but what made them really angry was that, two years before, he had put himself beyond their reach, by dying in his bed. They dug up his rotting body, and burned it in the square."

"Didn't they mind the stench?"

"Don't you English mind the stench of living bodies burning?"

"I mind it. But where can a man go?"

"I'm going to Poland."

"Why Poland?"

"They say King Sigismund is a most enlightened man. Possibly he gives that impression because nobody can speak Polish. His mother is Italian, but he speaks our language badly. And yet some Italians have taken refuge with him. A couple of years ago I met two of your own compatriots who were going there. A charming lady—Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk—and her second husband."

"Kate Willoughby in Poland!"

"Poor woman—she could not endure the English exiles in Frankfurt. They did so much quarrelling over the form of their prayer book that I doubt if they had the time to say any prayers. So she set out on that thousand-mile journey with a baby in her arms."

"That must be the child she was expecting when I saw her last. They were going to call it Peregrine."

"So they did. From *peregrinator*—to wander in foreign parts. She almost gave birth to it in a church porch, where she and her husband were sheltering from the rain."

"What!" I said. "Were they destitute?"

"No, but they were about to be arrested, in some Catholic place, and they fled in great haste, on foot. They came safely to Wesel, which is Protestant, but by that time they were bedraggled with mud and rain. They looked so dirty and so poor that no innkeeper would let them past his threshold. The innkeepers could see, I suppose, how far gone the lady was, and they were afraid of having a child born on their clean sheets. And all the time these two knew that they had friends in Wesel, who would help them, but they could not pronounce the name right, or explain themselves in German. So they sheltered in the church porch. Then they heard two schoolboys practising their Latin, and so they were able to talk to them. They found their friends in the nick of time."

I said: "I knew Kate Willoughby when she was living in silk and splendour."

"So she is again, by now. King Sigismund has given her and her husband a whole province to govern. We must expect these reverses, if we go about the world looking for toleration."

"You don't expect to find it in Geneva?"

"I do not. There are some good Italians living there, but . . . May I ask you, signore, since you proclaim yourself 'not a Protestant', what you will do in Geneva?"

"I have some private business there."

"In Geneva nothing is private. The Elders of the Church come bursting into every house, to see what books are being read, what letters written—even how many heads have dented the pillow. I'm afraid my poor darlings"—he waved a hand at the girls, who were now laying the table—"will have to be very discreet." He

sighed. "In Venice nobody minded. I'm not the only man there who's bought a couple of slaves from a Turk."

"Are they Turkish girls?"

"No; Berbers, from the Atlas Mountains. You see how light-skinned they are? Those exquisite features . . . I couldn't choose between them; I had to buy them both. You know, I've never regretted that. It keeps them from fretting; they're company for each other. And so sweet-tempered! I never knew, till I got them, what it was to have a truly happy home."

I studied the girls' looks. Men often boast that they can keep two women satisfied, but this man had, to bear him out, the smiles of contentment on two beautiful faces.

I said: "But what's your answer, when the Church tells you that heresy is a cover for self-indulgence?"

"That's another point in favour of heresy. To indulge myself—that is, the self I truly have, not the self the Church or my family think I should have—is the only way to be completely a man. Weeping and repenting can only cripple the soul. I know; I was brought up to it. Our part of the country is *damp* with remorse. There's a heavy mist that forms at sundown round the Castle of Oria. The village people tell you it's a punishment, because one of my ancestors fancied a peasant girl, and carried her off to the Castle. The silly creature preferred to die a virgin, and she threw herself off the battlements. Her mother found the body and cried out: 'May these battlements forever smoke, as my heart is smoking now!'"

At this point Giulia and Tisiphone brought our food. They had somehow constructed, out of what they found in the kitchen, a *pizza napolitana*.

"Bravo!" I said.

"You have surpassed yourselves, my dears," the Marquis told them. Turning to me, he went on: "What do you think is the point of that story?"

"Don't build your castle in a foggy place," I said. "And make sure the girl is willing!"

"Exactly. But you see, if my ancestor had understood his nature, and indulged it wisely, he would not have grown so ravenous as to attack a girl who did not even want him. I made up my mind, as a boy, that I would live according to my nature. If my reason can-

not follow the dogmas of the Church, if my lust cannot be contained in what is called a Christian marriage, then I will not let myself be stretched upon those racks. It has cost me dear, to live in my own way. I've lost my estates; I have warrants out for me in a dozen cities; and here I am still wandering like a gipsy. But I have never given up that search for truth, which (as Aconcio says) is the divine part of me. How could I have kept my soul open to that search, if I had married a girl chosen for me, and settled down to beget heirs for Oria?"

"Is it better for the soul, then, to beget bastards?"

"What bastards? I've taught the girls to do as the Venetian courtesans do—soak a little sponge in vinegar and put it at the entrance to the womb."

"Does that work?"

"So far."

"But can you talk to these girls?"

"They understand me. They speak a little Italian."

"But can you expound your ideas to them, as you have been expounding them to me?"

With a shrug, he asked me: "Have you ever found a bed-mate fit for serious talk?"

"I'm still searching."

"Then you may search longer for a woman than for truth."

The face of Galeazzo, fat and frowning, appeared in the doorway. He spluttered, and seemed about to begin a tirade, but the Marquis forestalled him.

"No, no, don't apologise! The two hours I waited for you have passed like two minutes, thanks to our English friend."

Galeazzo caught sight of me for the first time. He could not at once leave off scowling, and stood irresolute, while I bowed and said: "You asked me to come here, Monsignore."

"Of course, of course," Galeazzo replied. Then he burst out: "but you never said that you were coming with *him*!"

The Marquis laughed. "Don't be alarmed, Galeazzo! Signor Vaughan has only just met me; I do not think I have yet made him a disciple. He's no disciple of yours either; he claims to be a Catholic. I hope you won't let Calvin eat him alive."

"I know how to look after my guest," retorted Galeazzo. "You're the one who's going to be in danger, if you dare set foot

inside the city. What! Did you really think we'd let you in, with your two black whores?"

"Don't call my whores black! They have a much better colour than you." He looked maliciously at the red face of Galeazzo. "And are you the man to reproach me with having two women at once?"

"That's enough!" shouted Galeazzo. "Just remember one thing! We know who paid for the printing of Castellio's pamphlet."

The Marquis sighed. "Ah well! I shall be in Poland a little sooner than I had expected. How charming my dear girls will look in their furs!" Turning to me, he added: "I am sorry, signore, to part with you so soon. Perhaps, one day, we shall meet in England."

I thanked him for the supper and the entertainment. Then I joined Galeazzo, who was waiting for me outside. As the inn servants brought my horse, Galeazzo begged my pardon for his first cold welcome.

"Of course I am glad to see you," he said. "I hope you will do me the honour of staying with me. But I was put out by finding you with that man. There isn't another one like him in Europe!"

"Surely," I said, "there are other noblemen whose religion is to do exactly as they please."

"But he preaches it," said Galeazzo, "and to common people. If the peasants took to that religion, who'd grow the corn?"

Somebody was growing it well enough, on the Genevan side of the bridge. The low sun caught the yellowing stalks and made the whole wide plain seem ripe for harvesting. At first sight it did not appear that the ears of the corn were still green.

The bright, clean wooden houses by the frontier post were full of noise; at every open door people were working, seizing the last of the light for their spinning or sewing or carpentry. Above all the noise I could hear the insistent beat of a hammer.

"That sounds like your friend," said Galeazzo. "He comes out here every evening after work."

He led me a little way off the road, to a house which looked even more bright and new than the rest. At the open door a man was making a chair. I saw his black curls bent over the task. One

strong, sunburned hand held the chair, another the hammer. His great shoulder muscles were visible through the shirt.

"Timothy!" I said.

He looked up. Though I had known the shoulders, I should hardly have known the face. When I had seen it last it had a prison pallor, and if the eyes glowed it was with expectation of a fiery death. Now the skin was ruddy, the eyes bright; and the stubborn mouth had remembered how to laugh.

"Sir!" he cried out. "Is it really you?"

. I saw how, even at this moment, one practised hand put the chair down gently, and the other found a neat place for the hammer to rest. He tried to kneel to me, but I raised him up, and hugged him, and let him go. Then I looked at that face, in that golden light, and hugged him again.

"Sir!" he said. "You don't know what you've done for us. Come and see!"

He led me into the house. It was like any other peasant's house in those parts. From the outside it looked large, but most of the space was for storing firewood and flour. There was a carpenter's workshop, too, and a little bakehouse. All the living space was one room, with a steep staircase to a loft.

"Since you sent that letter, sir, and the money, we've been able to make it much grander than we expected."

How could it have been less grand? The floor was nothing but planks of pinewood; the walls were panelled with pine. Only the wooden ceiling had some simple decoration. A rose was carved in the middle. "That's for my Rosa!" he said. Then he added: "You've been so generous to me, sir, that I did not have to make a stove, which I might have done badly, since it's not my trade. I had one made by the best craftsman in Geneva."

It was indeed a good strong earthenware stove, filling one whole corner of the room, with benches fitted round it, and a slanting chimney.

"The chimney will heat the loft as well," Timothy said. "So we'll be warm in bed."

He led me upstairs. The bedroom had a window bigger and wider than is usual in those parts. "If we have another attack from Savoy," Timothy explained, "the first thing we'll know is that

the house is afire. I made the window big, so that we can jump out."

The bed was carved, not badly, with fruit and sheaves of corn, but there were no mattresses or blankets.

"Those things are coming from the town," Timothy said. "Mistress Bologna has been helping Rosa to buy them."

The only other furniture in this room was a chest. "Your wife will need a looking-glass," I said.

"A looking-glass!" Timothy cried out.

"Did your mother never have one?"

"Never! My father had a bit of tin, for shaving, and my mother would look in that to see if her kerchief was straight."

I had lived long with my remorse for Margaret. But I had not thought that never once, after marriage, had she been able to see her own beautiful face. I said: "I'll buy your bride a looking-glass."

We came downstairs. As I held the rail, I felt the strength and pleasantness of every joint in the wood. "My father taught me how to make a strong joint," Timothy said.

This I had been prepared for—to hear him say "my father" when he meant the carpenter Joe Thaxted. He said it again. "My father and mother have written to bless my marriage." Then he showed me the furniture he had made. "But the house itself—I had to have help from the people here." He took me outside to show me. "They have their own ways, you see, of making it strong against the snow. There's this raised foundation, to keep the house off the damp ground, and the wide eaves, to keep the snow from the walls, and the strong shutters over the windows. It was wonderful how they all came round to help me. They're almost like the early Christians, who held all goods in common."

He showed me more of his handiwork—the hen-house, the pigsty, and the neat little privy built out over the river. "I didn't dig the well, though," he admitted. "We paid two men to do that, when your letter came. Look—they've made us a pump, so that we needn't haul a bucket on a rope. Some people take their water from the river, but Dr. Bologna says that's not healthy. And what a business, to break the ice in winter! Our well is too deep to freeze."

"You have no stable," I said.

"I'll build one, if we ever need a horse. But it's only about a mile to the town. The walk every morning and evening will do me good."

"Couldn't you have built your house nearer?"

"That's not permitted. Geneva used to have suburbs, but when the people turned out the Prince-Bishop, and the Papists brought an army against them, all the houses outside the city walls were pulled down, and everybody had to pack inside. It's very crowded. I've always been used to country air, so I came out here. They gave me permission to build by the river, on condition I would drill with an arquebus, to be ready for any attack from Savoy. That's what all the men do out here. It's well worth it, sir, to be in such a beautiful place."

Galeazzo, who had been all this time sitting on a tree-stump, watching our two horses, now called out: *"Eccoli!"* and then *"Les voilà!"*

A cart was lumbering towards us, piled high with some soft stuff, and on the cart sat two women.

"Rosa!" Timothy cried out. He ran to help her off the cart. She slid into his arms, with a sort of trustfulness . . . Once Margaret had slid off a horse into my traitorous arms. And surely this girl was very much like Margaret?

I had no time to look; there was another lady waiting to be helped off the cart. She ignored Galeazzo's outstretched hand, and took mine. Since I had to hold her firmly to help her down, we made our first acquaintance in what was almost an embrace. The smallness of her waist, and the softness of everything else, would have disposed me to make it a proper one, if we had been alone.

"Merci, monsieur!" she said, as I set her free.

I was flustered, and answered in the wrong language. *"Prego, signora!"*

"You speak Italian?" she said. "Oh, thank God; that makes everything simpler. Are you Signor Vaughan? . . . I'm Costanza Bologna. But we'll have to talk later. The cart has been so slow; we'll never get all this bedding unloaded by nightfall."

Timothy was leading his bride towards me. They plumped down on their knees together, and asked for my blessing.

"Who am I to call down blessings on you?" I asked.

Timothy said: "You gave me back my life."

"Then God bless you," I said, "for making such good use of it! God bless you both, and send you every joy on earth!"

The bride's face, clear before me in that enchanted light, was like Margaret's, only with a soft Italian bloom. I raised her up and asked if I might kiss her. Smiling, she offered me her cheek. But when I put my worn and bearded face against it, I felt a trespasser.

She was all Timothy's. While he and the carter unloaded the heavy bedding, she watched, and doted on, his every movement. The swiftness and skill of the two working men made helpless bystanders of Galeazzo and me. The women, too, moved faster than we did. They made the bed and packed the spare sheets neatly into the chest. "There!" said the carter, nudging Timothy. "You can try it out tonight, if the Elders aren't looking."

Timothy did not at once answer; I thought he did not understand the man's rustic French. But presently he said in French, blushing like a girl: "We shall not be married until the Sunday after next."

Before we left the house, Timothy, to my surprise, buckled on a sword. "This is your sword, sir," he said. "I must give it back to you."

"Keep it, if it's useful."

"Well yes, it is, because everyone wears a sword here, even labouring men." I saw then that the carter had one. "There's no fighting allowed," Timothy went on. "You can be hung for that. But the men say they must have swords, to show they're all equal citizens."

Soon we were on our way to the town, Galeazzo and I on horseback, Timothy on the cart with the women. I saw him take his bride's hand, and hold it between his hands. He was not like me; he would not betray her.

The peaks glittered in the last of the sunset; the valley was refreshed with a damp, sweet wind. Nothing that I had been told beforehand of this place was real to me now. I felt that I had come at last into a country where there was trust, and innocence, and virtue.

Slowly, slowly, we came to the gates of the town.

6

Timothy jumped off the cart when we reached a broad, squat house, with its upper storey beetling over the dark street.

"This is our printing press," he told me. "I lodge in the attic upstairs. If you will come here in the morning, sir, I'll show you our work."

I could not let him go, without embracing him again.

The next house where we stopped was that of Signora Bologna. Galeazzo and I helped the women off the cart. Again, this was a pleasure. The dress of a Genevan woman is designed for modesty; there is none of the stiff corseting, the pushing of breasts out of shape, which is the fashion in Italy. So, when you help a woman to dismount, you are aware of a sweet yielding softness.

But there was no softness in the face of Signora Bologna. When Galeazzo tried to bid her goodnight, she said: "Stop! We still have to make the arrangements for the wedding."

Galeazzo yawned and said: "Signor Vaughan and I will talk to you in the morning."

"We'll talk now," she said. "Or I shall not sleep."

"But I have to find my groom and get him to stable the horses," Galeazzo protested.

"Then do that! Your house is only a step away. We shall be waiting for you."

Without further argument, she led me into her house. There was no hall, except the space between the two doors which (as usual in that country) made a double barrier against the weather. The second door opened straight into a room with two candles burning. One shone upon some needlework, the other on the pages of a book. The old woman doing the needlework, and the old man reading the book, I made out only as I was presented to them.

"This," said Signora Bologna, "is my aunt, the Countess of Pescarola, and this is Dr. Bologna, my husband."

I thought her husband must be more than twenty years older

than herself. But it was hard to be sure of her own age. Thirty-three, thirty-four . . . She moved like her young maid; only her face had grown stern and sorrowful.

As I shook hands with Dr. Bologna, I remembered to give him greetings from Marco Rafael.

"My dear old friend!" he said. "It has always been on my conscience that I didn't write to him. But I could not bear to write him a trifling letter, and serious ones are dangerous both to receive and send."

Young Rosa brought in biscuits and wine. I heard Signora Bologna gently telling her to go to bed. I whispered that she might be allowed to stay up; I had nothing extraordinary to say.

"But I have!" said Signora Bologna.

When she had poured out the wine, the girl obediently left us.

"She is all we have," Signora Bologna said. "We have brought her up as our own. We agreed to this marriage because it seemed to be for her happiness, but if we are mistaken, if Rosa finds herself playing a part in a tragedy . . ."

"Why should she?"

"Perhaps you can tell us that. Signor Vaughan, as I understand the story—and I think I do understand it; Timothy's French is improving—you never set eyes on him until he was on trial for heresy."

"That's true."

"You then took him out of the common prison, made the jailer give him a room to himself, saw that he had every comfort, and finally gave him your own clothes, so that he could escape."

"Yes."

"Timothy says you must have done this for religious reasons. But that's not true, is it? You don't share his opinions."

"No, I'm a Catholic."

"You have showered him with money—so much money that he does not mind if Rosa has no dowry."

"I have given him what I could well afford."

"A young man who is not of your own rank, with whom you have nothing in common —"

Here her husband tried to interrupt her, but she cried out to him: "If you'd seen what I've seen this evening, you'd say the same. This man cannot take his eyes off Timothy. When they said

goodnight he embraced the lad, as if it broke his heart to let him go. Can you tell me this is natural?"

"Very natural," I said, "since he's my son."

"There!" said the old Countess, looking up from her needlework. "Just as I said! One can always tell a bastard of good family. And now that I look at Signor Vaughan . . ." She brought the candle closer to my face. "Of course! We should all have seen the resemblance at once, if it had not been for the beard. Why do you hide yourself behind so much hair?"

"For that very reason," I said. "I cannot bear to tell Timothy; he would think I was defaming his mother. And I did not want anyone here to know. I would not have told you, but it seems you need some assurance that all my vices are natural."

"Please forgive my wife," said the Doctor. "She was misled by a certain reputation which Englishmen have in Italy."

"Truly, it wasn't that!" Signora Bologna said. "Of course I know your whole nation can't be — But then, if you were such a loving father, why did you never set eyes on Timothy until he was twenty-three?"

"I could not find him."

"Did you try?" asked Signora Bologna. "Weren't you glad enough to fly away, and leave your cuckoo in another man's nest?"

"That was how I thought of it then," I said. "But now I see that I was the one I cheated. You say I spend money freely, and so I do, though I've always been grasping and covetous till now. But even while I'm spending, I know it's useless. Money may ease my conscience a little, but there is nothing I can buy to make up for what I've lost. I never saw my son grow up."

Signora Bologna suddenly burst into tears and ran out of the room. Her husband and the Countess looked at each other. Then Dr. Bologna went to join his wife. I asked the Countess: "Have I said something wrong?"

"It is not your fault," she said. "My niece's only son died a month ago."

I crossed myself, and saw her raise her eyebrows at the gesture. Presently she said: "For fifteen years my niece thought she was barren . . . It seemed a miracle, to have a baby in the house at last. We had him just long enough to see him lose his crumpled new-born look, and give promise of being handsome."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Who knows what babies die of? He withered like a flower."

She wiped her eyes. I dared not say the Catholic words of consolation, and I did not know any Protestant ones. I held my peace.

"Well!" said the Countess. "At least *you* do not tell me that this was God's plan to test our faith."

Husband and wife now returned. "Forgive me —" I began.

"No, you must forgive me!" said Signora Bologna. "I have been very foolish and very rude. I know that Galeazzo has brought you here for a purpose which I think wrong, but . . . You may feel that you have good reasons for agreeing to that."

Taken aback, I said that my only reason for visiting Geneva was to see Timothy married.

She stared at me. "Do you give us your word that you had no other purpose in coming here?"

"On my honour as a gentleman."

"But Galeazzo has been telling everyone —"

There was a knock. "That *is* Galeazzo," she whispered.

"Don't say any more, then!" said her husband, going to open the door.

Galeazzo greeted us all with a beaming good fellowship which seemed to turn Signora Bologna to stone. "Is everything settled? I suppose," he added, turning to me, "you can give us your assurance that Timothy is not married or promised already? Right! I have to ask, you understand, because we have known exiles whose reasons for coming here were not entirely religious. That reminds me!" He did not cease to smile, but looked intently at each person in turn. "No doubt Signor Vaughan has told you of his curious encounter at the inn?"

"No," I said. Something in the air about me made me add: "I forgot it completely. We have been too busy over the marriage."

"What!" said Galeazzo. "You never mentioned meeting the Marquis of Oria!"

Husband and wife looked at him, and then at me, as if not daring to look at each other. The Countess cried out: "Is Oria here? What next?" Turning to me, she asked: "How is he looking?"

"Very handsome," I said.

She shook her head as if this were bad news. "Such a good family! Of course the people here will hardly appreciate that."

"They will not have the chance to appreciate either his family or himself," Galeazzo said. "He will not be allowed to set foot on Genevan soil. I wonder"—he looked intently at Signora Bologna—"I wonder what made him imagine he would be. Who did he think would make him welcome?"

She turned to me. "You must not think," she said, "that we are giving Rosa no dowry at all. I have a few jewels left . . ."

The conversation thus reverted to the wedding. They explained to me that, because it was against their laws to be idle on a working day, weddings were held only on Sundays. Timothy and Rosa would be married in the English exiles' church, after morning service on the Sunday after next. The wedding feast would be held in the open, outside the new house Timothy had built. "If it rains we split the party, and crowd into various houses," Signora Bologna said. I had no objection to these plans, and so we parted friends. Except that Signora Bologna treated Galeazzo even more coldly than before.

Her hint about some evil purpose he had, in inviting me to Geneva, made me almost afraid to go home with him. But he showed me the utmost courtesy. This nobleman lived in a sort of bare stone cottage, and kept only two menservants, but what he had was mine to share. He showed me that my room had its own stairway to the back door; I might have a key, and come and go as I pleased.

Just before I went to bed Galeazzo asked me: "Did Oria say what reason he had for visiting Geneva?"

"No," I said, watching his face.

"He didn't speak of any Italian exile he wanted to see?"

"Only yourself." This was true. Oria had not mentioned any other name.

It was a strange feeling to wake in the morning, and look out of my window straight at a cathedral, and yet to know that I could not go to Mass. Galeazzo soon told me that the cathedral was now called simply: "The Church of St. Pierre." He added reverently; "It's where Maître Calvin preaches."

After breakfast he took me along narrow cobbled streets, like

the streets of any French town. Above the tiny shops thin, shuttered upper storeys ended in steep roofs. It was, as Timothy had said, very crowded; people spilled out of every doorway and jostled us in the streets. They called sharply to one another, in a dialect which I could recognise as French. It was their clothes I found strange. The simple, dark, unstiffened dresses, which looked well on Rosa and her mistress, grew tedious to see on so many clumsy bodies, which could with advantage have used some artifice. The dark doublet and plain cloak which Galeazzo wore did something to hide his puffy fatness; but to see them on young men seemed unnatural. "Would a little colour hurt your religion?" I asked. "Or lace, or embroidery?"

Galeazzo said: "Do you see anyone in rags?"

I had to admit there was not a beggar in sight. "Where do you put them?" I asked.

"In our almshouses, or our hospital. You see, when Geneva dissolved its monasteries, it did not follow the example of your King Henry, and give the spoils to a few rich men. Everything went to the City Council. So they were able to do more for the poor and the sick than the monks had ever done, and still there was enough left over to build new ramparts for the city. But we need more than ramparts to defend us against all France and all Savoy. We must have discipline; we must have hard work. If there are to be no beggars, then there must be no rich idlers to set the beggars an example. And what is there in fine clothes—trailing skirts, lace cuffs, fingers heavy with jewels—except a public proclamation that the wearer does not need to work? Here everybody works."

I could see this for myself. Even the women fetching water from the public taps were simply fetching it, not stopping to gossip. When I remarked on this, Galeazzo said. "And you thought we could not change the nature of man! We have changed even the nature of woman."

I saw that the inns, and some of the bigger houses, had what looked like iron windmills projecting from their chimneys.

"They work the spits to turn the meat," Galeazzo explained. "Instead of letting some idle fellow doze by the fire all day, we make the wind work for us."

His proudest moment, I think, was when I asked him why there

were no children running about the streets. He replied: "Every child in Geneva goes to school."

"Don't the sons of artisans learn their fathers' trades?"

"Yes, when they are older, but they learn to read first. And on Sunday mornings, while the parents are in church, the children go to Sunday school to learn the catechism. Geneva takes a special pride in its children. You may have heard our enemies jeer about the Elders, who visit every house. What these Elders do is to protect the children from ill-treatment, and make sure that they are sent to school."

"I thought the Elders went into bedrooms to look for adulterous couples."

"They have . . . a number of responsibilities."

He led me into the shop of a tailor, who addressed him as "Monsieur le Marquis". Galeazzo made no protest at this use of a title which did not belong to him (his father being still alive).

The tailor measured me for the suit of clothes I was to wear at the wedding. "It's not often we have such a tall customer," he said.

"Oh, the English are all the same," said Galeazzo. "A nation of giants!" I thought there was some envy in his voice.

Then he began insisting that the doublet should be black. I said: "Must you wear the same clothes for weddings and funerals?"

"The clothes are the outward form. We rejoice inwardly. When two Christian souls agree to live as one, it's a time for prayer, not for pagan dancing and music."

"No dancing!" I cried out.

"We shall eat and drink together," he said, "in moderation."

Next, he took me to the printing house where Timothy worked. "I shall not come inside," he said. "You will want to talk English, and besides . . . Like everyone else in Geneva, I have work to do. I shall be seeing Maître Calvin; I shall ask when I may present you to him."

"Am I to meet Maître Calvin?"

"Of course! And the sooner the better!"

That would be something to tell Marco. The most famous heretic in Europe . . .

I found Timothy upstairs, in his shirtsleeves, sitting with ten or twelve other young men at a long table by a window. The table was covered with sheets of manuscript and strips of printed paper.

When Timothy told his companions who I was, all work stopped. A dozen hands at once were outstretched to shake my hand; a dozen pairs of arms opened to embrace me. These were not subtile Italians, probing my motives; they were simply and heartily grateful to me, for saving twenty-two comrades from a horrible death. Surrounded by these friendly faces, I forgot that I did not share their faith. I remembered only that I shared their language.

"Will you have dinner with us?" they asked me, and added a warning: "It's only bread and cheese." I could not refuse, for fear of seeming to despise their humble food. They sent an apprentice to the house of Galeazzo, to tell him that I would not be back for dinner. "And call on Mr. Knox!" Timothy told the boy in French. "Tell Mr. Knox what a visitor we have."

Then he told me that, before dinner, there would be time to see the works. He took me first to the foundry, which stood by itself, behind the main building. It had the biggest glass windows I had ever seen. At a bench by the window, where the most light came in, a man was filing tiny pieces of metal, and another man polishing them. Looking more closely, I saw that each piece of metal was an oblong block, with a letter cast in relief, mirror-fashion, at one end.

"These men are finishing the types," Timothy said. "When they first come out of the moulds, they are too rough to use."

The moulding was done at the other side of the room. Four men stood each in his little cubby-hole, with his own furnace and his crucible of molten lead. I watched a man pour lead into a mould. He gave a sudden upward jerk of his left hand—the hand that held the mould. It was an odd movement, more grotesque. than dancing, yet more deliberate than a spasm of pain. "He is forcing the metal into the corners of the mould," Timothy explained.

He began to speak to the typefounders in French. It was curious how his Essex accent mingled with the accent of Geneva. But he was my boy; his French could be understood. The men left their

work and stood round me, wiping their hands on their great leather aprons, and then they bowed to me, because I had saved men like themselves. I shook each powerful, grimy hand.

We came back to the main building. Here, on the ground floor, the printers sat in a row, each man with a page of manuscript held firm in a claw-like device before him. In his left hand he held a sort of grooved stick, while his right hand, with a speed I could hardly follow, picked the lead letters out of partitioned boxes, and slipped them into the groove, until they made mirror-words, mirror-lines, mirror-sentences. Some of the type was so small that it was a miracle they could see it, let alone handle it.

"It is hard work," Timothy said. "People think we're a lazy lot in here, because we only work eight hours a day. But it's impossible to do more; the print blurs before your eyes."

"Do the printers understand the words?" I asked.

"No, that's our great difficulty here; the printers read nothing but French. They set the English words by copying one letter after another. You can imagine how many mistakes they make."

I saw that when a page of type was complete one man inked it with a black pad, and another laid a strip of paper on it, pressed a sort of mat down on the paper, and gently hammered on the mat until the paper took the impression of the type. It seemed slow work. "I thought you would have a wooden press, like a cheese press," I said.

"So we have," said Timothy. "This hammering is only to make the rough copies, for us to see upstairs. When we've made the corrections, and then corrected the printers' new mistakes, and perhaps done it all a third time, and it really is right, they lock four pages into one forme, and then it's put on this trolley, and wheeled to the press."

He led me into the next room, which at first I took for a laundry. But amid the clothes-lines we found a huge press, braced to the ceiling by solid beams. I found a strange dance going on; a man was shaking two ink pads and pushing them together. ("To make the ink flow evenly," Timothy said.) Then the man danced both ink pads over the surface of the forme. The press man turned a handle to wind the forme into its place under the press. Then he brought down a lever. When he released it a boy pulled out the

sheet of printed paper—four quarto pages—and another boy hung it on a line to dry. It was because of these lines, hung with sheets of damp paper, that I had thought of a laundry.

Again and again the lever came down. The four pages were duplicated hundreds of times.

"And each one exactly right!" Timothy said. "That's the best of a good solid press, that never smudges or slips." His carpenter's hands ran over the joints in the woodwork. "You know, sir, to me this place is as holy as a church. Because this is what has put the Bible into poor men's hands. Don't you think, sir, the inventors of printing must have been guided by God?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to remark that neither God nor poor men could be paying for all this. But I held my peace. I had seen enough of the rich English merchants in Venice; I knew where the money came from.

I looked at some of the sheets. This was different from any other English Bible I had seen, being printed, not in crabbed old black letters, but in the Roman type they use in Italy. So it should have been pleasant to read. But I was distracted by the division of the text into short paragraphs, each of which had a number. "That's to help people find the place," Timothy explained.

Still more distracting were the marginal notes, clustering thickly in a smaller type. Where the Gospel of St. Luke said that Elizabeth's baby moved within her womb, the note declared: "This moving was extraordinary, and not natural, which was to commend the miracle." A note on Judas's thirty pieces of silver said that each piece was worth 4½d. of English money.

"Who is so sure of these things?" I asked.

Timothy said: "Our translators are very learned men. And of course they consult Mr. Knox about the notes." As if promising me a treat, he added: "You'll meet Mr. Knox."

Then he began to tell the pressman and his assistants about me. They embraced me warmly, sweating printer's ink.

It was the same when we returned to the room where the printers were setting up the type. Their foreman said to me that, in Geneva, where they had full freedom to propagate God's word, they were sometimes tempted to forget the afflictions of their persecuted Brethren. I replied that my afflictions had been light ones. I forgot to add that I was not, in fact, one of their Brethren.

Timothy found a piece of soap and took me outside to the pump, where I washed my hands for dinner. "We all have to be careful," he said. "Printer's ink is not wholesome."

We returned to the upper room where the correcting was done. The table had been cleared of papers, and laid for dinner. The wooden platters were ready. So was the bread and cheese, and the pewter mugs, and the flagons of beer. But it seemed we could not begin, till Mr. Knox arrived.

They filled up the time by telling me news of England. One man said: "Those poor souls you saved have been threatened with more trouble. The magistrate who arrested them in the first place asked leave to arrest them again. Someone at court warned him that the Privy Council hadn't set those prisoners free without good reason."

"Then are they safe?" I asked.

"Is anyone safe? Not so long as Bloody Mary's alive."

Bloody Mary . . . Could they really mean the Queen? Several voices began asking: "Is Bloody Mary going to die?"

Someone broke in: "She must be going to die; the point is—when?"

"No! The point is—what happens next?"

"What will Elizabeth do?" At once they were all asking me: "Have you seen her? Do you know her? What do you think of Elizabeth?"

There was a sudden, reverent hush. So I heard the arrival of John Knox, before I saw him. He was, indeed, so soberly dressed as to be hardly visible. His black robe reached the ground; his flat, black hat had side-pieces which covered half his cheeks; his black beard hid his chin. He might have been a moving shadow, but for the brightness of his eyes.

"Welcome, sir!" he said, in a purring Scottish voice. "Welcome to Geneva! First of all, I must ask you—have you a roof over your head?"

I told him I was staying with "Monsieur le Marquis". His eyes widened; his manner became more respectful. As he took his place at the head of the table, he invited me to his right hand. Before we sat down he said Grace—the longest Grace I had heard, but still in that soft sweet purr, which makes every word sound like the best of common sense. Lulled by the

purring, I took no note of his heresies, until they concerned me directly.

"And now, Lord, humbly we beseech Thee to look down on this our guest, who at length, oh Lord, after passing his life in the very stench of iniquity, has fled even from the cities of the plain, and has shown such tokens of the workings of Thy grace, oh Lord, that we may very reasonably hope for some firm purpose of amendment. Grant him, oh Lord, contrition for his manifold sins, show him his utter vileness before Thee . . ."

Well, yes, I had sometimes thought I was vile; but was it for my host to tell me so? The voice purred sweetly on.

". . . that with tears of true repentance he may come at last to an assurance of Thy mercy, and to a knowledge of that unspeakable bliss, prepared by Thee for Thy elect. Amen."

"Amen!" said everyone, with fervour. I looked with some surprise at Timothy, and he smiled at me, as if pleased that I had been honoured with such favourable notice.

Mr. Knox himself, now that he had finished praying, began to talk to me in a pleasant, friendly manner. He pressed bread, butter and cheese on me, apologising because there was nothing else. I said truthfully that it was delicious. The mountain countries make a richer butter and a tastier cheese than any to be had in Venice.

"All that we do is naught before the Lord," said Mr. Knox, "but you did us a good turn when you saved Timothy. You know," he added, laughing, "what the lad has the impudence to do! He turns my good Scottish spelling into English! Ay, and so he should; it's the English we have to reach. Timothy's our speller-in-chief - the only one here who was taught to write his own tongue. You know how the most part of Englishmen are schooled. By the time they're ten years old they can spell any Latin word, and a little later any Greek one; but English they put down as it comes to their fancy."

"Thomas Cromwell used to complain of that," I said.

"Did you know Thomas Cromwell?" Mr. Knox asked. "There was a right hardy soldier of Christ!"

How my old master would have laughed at this! "He considered himself a soldier of Machiavelli," I said.

"We must not hearken to slanderers," Mr. Knox answered, and

his voice purred so sweetly that I did not think to ask why he was calling me a liar. I only protested mildly: "But I'm talking of what he himself said to me."

Mr. Knox shook his head, with a little tight smile. "Ay! There's many Englishmen today want to think ill of Thomas Cromwell. They want to forget that grand spirit of his. There's too many of your nation, sir, prepared to wait upon events, to let their poor country suffer, only in the hope that you may have another queen. When from all we hear of this Elizabeth, she'll very likely prove another Jezebel —"

This was too much. I said: "Princess Elizabeth is a most virtuous lady."

"Oh? Is this another one you know?" asked Mr. Knox with a mean smile. Around the table intent faces were watching me.

"I have seen her at court," I said.

"But have you had any talk with her?"

"Yes, in English and Italian. I believe she is also well versed in French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew."

"All this," Mr. Knox remarked, "may be as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

"Her learning might not fit her to be a Queen," I agreed. "What is more to the purpose is her good sense. Look at the dangers that she has to thread her way through! With every ambitious man in the kingdom plotting to marry her, with hotheads trying to embroil her in uprisings, with the French ambassador sending her messages in code, with her own sister's husband, King Philip, in love with her —"

They interrupted me there. What evidence had I?

"King Philip is not a man to show his feelings in public," I said. "And he always pays a proper attention to the Queen. But for all that, he has a way of looking at Elizabeth —"

Mr. Knox laughed. "We have a saying in Scotland—love's like a cold; it canna be hid."

"The proof that he loves her," I said, "is that he incessantly urges his dying wife to name Elizabeth as her heir. Although to every Catholic she's a bastard. And yet Elizabeth has given him nothing beyond sisterly courtesy."

"How can you be sure of that?" asked Mr. Knox.

"We can all be sure of it now, since King Philip is in Brussels,

and Elizabeth at Hatfield. But before that, before he left England, the spies her sister placed round her could not report one immodest look or word. Because of that, I was once asked to spy on her."

"And you refused?"

"Yes," I said, suddenly remembering. I had that reason to respect myself.

"There's one thing you've not mentioned," said Mr. Knox. "Her godliness."

"I said she was virtuous."

He pulled down the corners of his mouth, as only a Scotsman can.

"These three years and more, she's bowed the knee before the Romish Mass."

"She may believe it's the best religion."

"Or she may believe," said Mr. Knox, "that there's no difference between one religion and another."

I thought this very possible. "But she is not likely," I said, "to adopt any faith which requires her to give up dancing. She does it excellently. And her playing on the virginals is not bad, for a princess. Indeed, she loves all entertainments, particularly plays."

"A mind bent on fleshly things," remarked Mr. Knox, "even while her tongue is busy with the Gospel. Ay! We've met them, we've met them, Mr. Vaughan, even among our own Brethren. Exiles, they tell us, for the sake of the Gospel. And yet, when they talk of this Church they mean to establish, once Elizabeth is queen, what is it but a cloaked Papistry, or a mingle-mangle? This Frankfurt gang—these are the men who preached before Elizabeth, who taught her in her childhood. They believe they know her mind. And they say she wants a compromise."

This was the best news I'd heard since leaving my country. "A compromise!" I repeated.

"Ay—if you can think of compromise between God and the Devil. The Pope's power abolished, but the Queen to be her own Pope. Services in English, but the playing of the old Papist music. The Mass abolished, but a communion service to ape it. What's worst of all, the churches are to keep their stained glass and their statues."

"But these are beautiful things!" I said. "I can't endure to be without them."

Nobody answered. I looked round the table, and saw some sorrowful shaking of heads. Timothy looked at me as if I had confessed, not to wickedness, but to cowardice.

"I know," I said, "that you are all very brave men. I have seen Timothy preparing to be burned, as cheerfully as he is now preparing for his wedding. And I know that what gave him courage was that he felt the presence of God. He felt it in a bare prison, though he had no crucifix or holy picture —"

"Because he had no crucifix or picture," said John Knox.

"Does that follow?"

He answered: "Mr. Vaughan, I spent a year as a prisoner of the French King. I was in the galleys; my wrists were chained to the oar. The chafing made them suppurate" — he held up his wrists, and showed me the scars. "Ay, and there's more I could show, on my back; the taskmaster flogged me till he had me weeping like a woman. Do you think I prayed then to any trumpery image, any twopenny-halfpenny thing from a stall at a fair? No! It was the living God who came to wipe my tears away. God is a spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and truth."

"I am not so brave as you," I said. "I could not endure so much."

"Then it's your faith that's lacking," said Mr. Knox.

"I know," I said. "I do lack faith. But now and then, when I see the sun strike through a stained-glass window, or hear the voices of young boys at Christmas-time, singing 'The Holly and the Ivy' —"

Mr. Knox asked: "What's the holly and the ivy to do with the living God?"

"Why, nothing!" I said. "Except that they are beautiful things God made. And sometimes the things made by man are so beautiful that I cannot doubt the making was inspired by God. And it is at the moments when music and paintings ravish my soul that I feel . . . perhaps not faith, but a faint promise of what faith might be."

"Did you say a faint promise?"

"That's as much as I can achieve. And then it's only for a moment; my mind wanders. But since more people are like me

than are like you, a Church which is truly Catholic—universal—must allow for my weakness, as well as for your strength."

"You see!" said Mr. Knox, looking round the table triumphantly. "This is the weakness in faith, which is the cause of England's weakness in action. These are the people who were Papists in the beginning of Old Harry's reign, half-Protestants when their King told them, pretended Protestants in Edward's time, and now Papists again until there's another change. And all with no more than a faint promise of faith! This is why Englishmen will not take their fate into their own hands."

"How could we do that?" I asked.

I thought the question reasonable. But it made Mr. Knox laugh, and in an unpleasant way.

"No, no!" he said, shaking his head, and letting out little snorts between the words. "No, you'll not get that out of me."

He rose, and his court rose with him. It was a court. Though John Knox had eaten the same simple food as the rest, and drunk no more than they did of the common beer, he was their King. Around me I saw faces full of reverence, just as I had seen at the court of old King Henry. And I was the fledgling courtier who had blundered. As Mr. Knox parted from me, there was rebuke in his nod.

When I took my leave of Timothy at the door, I asked: "What did I say to offend him?"

"Nothing!" said Timothy. "That is . . . It's only that Mr. Knox is wary of political questions, after what happened at Frankfurt."

"What happened at Frankfurt?"

Timothy looked unhappy. "Mr. Knox wasn't . . . fairly dealt with." But then he smiled. "Do you know, sir, Mr. Knox is doing me a great honour? He is going to conduct the wedding himself."

This got me on to safer ground. "Your bride is very lovely," I said. "How did you meet her?"

"Well, sir, when I first came here six months ago, the printing was not going so fast as it is now, and I had no more than half a day's work every day. So I looked about for some carpentering to do. I saw a house where the shutters were hanging loose—there had been a great snowstorm the night before—and I knocked on the door, and it was Rosa who answered."

"What did you say to her?"

"Nothing, sir. I showed her my bag of tools, and pointed to the shutters, and made signs of mending them. She said: *'Combien?'* I knew that one word; it was the first thing I learned here. So I wrote on the shutter with my carpenter's pencil how many sous I wanted. Then Rosa called her mistress, and we came to an agreement. I would have done the work for nothing, only to be sure of seeing her again. Sir, I knew at once! It was as if God had tapped me on the shoulder, and said: 'That one!'"

"Then you courted her without words?"

"Rosa taught me the words. When I'd patched up the shutters, downstairs, I pointed up to the others, and made signs of climbing a ladder. Rosa said: *'Une échelle!'*, and she fetched me one, so then I knew that word. When I'd finished, she brought me into the house, to be paid. I wanted to tell the family that the shutters wouldn't last long; they were worm-eaten. I tried to show with my hands how a worm eats through wood. The whole family watched me; they laughed at this dance I was doing; but they couldn't understand. It was Rosa who said: *'Les volets sont vermoulus!'* She's wonderfully quick-witted. And she speaks French better than any of the family, because she grew up here. The Bolognas don't treat her like a servant; they even sent her to school. Well, sir, as time went on, they found more things for me to do in their house. I made the cradle for the poor little soul who died. And all the time I was working, Rosa was teaching me French."

"How did you take to the rest of the family?"

"I can't always understand the Doctor—he speaks his own kind of French. Before he would consent to my marriage with Rosa, he made me strip, and examined me thoroughly, and asked me—so far as I could understand—some very strange questions. But he must know what he's about. They say he's a good doctor."

"When he had examined you, was he pleased?"

"Oh yes! He said I was a credit to my country. His wife was in favour of the marriage all along. She's a wonderfully kind lady."

"I thought she was rather cold and stern. But I suppose that she's grieving for her dead baby."

"Yes, and for the troubles among the Italian exiles."

"What troubles?"

"It's not easy to get at the rights of it. They talk among themselves, in Italian . . . I tell them, whatever their trouble is, they must hold to the plain word of God. That's what brought us here, after all!"

To find a looking-glass for Rosa, I went to the Lower City – the part of Geneva nearest the Lake. I came on a street lined with tiny shops, all open, but sheltered from the heat of the sun by two high wooden canopies which ran the whole length of the street. This market was even more crowded than the rest of Geneva. But in all that crowd, there was not one who seemed to be enjoying himself, as people enjoy their marketing in other places. There was no bargaining, as I discovered when I tried to buy some strawberries. The shopkeeper stated his price. I stated another, and got nothing but a short, cold stare before the shopkeeper turned to the next customer. Nobody, I soon understood, had any time to waste. They did not pause, as I did, to look at the lake. It glittered at the end of every street. I saw the ships come to Geneva fluttering and dancing, as if they had not heard of Calvin's rule. I remembered then that I had come to buy a looking-glass.

I found a good one. It showed me a man still handsome, with beard still mainly black, a body upright and in perfect health . . . Only the lines betrayed me. When we are young we may hide our true characters, but, once we are past forty, the direction of the wrinkles must give us away. Mine were set in lines of deceit, of sly self-indulgence, of pride. Though I had little to be proud of, I thought, as I looked myself in the face.

I bought the glass, and hired a porter to carry it. I was not sure of the way to the house, but the man said he knew; everybody knew Dr. Bologna. And suddenly it was in front of me – the house with the new shutters Timothy had made, the house where, the night before, I had been so strangely received, and accused of unnatural vice. Why did I feel as if its pinched and narrow aspect were concealing a promise of delight?

Only the Doctor was at home. He cried out with pleasure at the glass. Then he frowned, at seeing his own face in it. I envied him his face. His wrinkles were more deeply graven than my own, but they were set in lines of gentleness, of generosity, of candour.

"The glass is too new!" he said. "It shows this bad colour of mine."

Like Michael, he had a tinge of blue in his lips. "Is it your heart?" I asked.

"Oh, my heart . . . What a tedious topic! I'm weary of it myself. Come, Signor Vaughan, have some wine!"

He took me into a sort of workshop behind the kitchen, and poured out wine for me. As I drank it, he continued the work which my coming had interrupted, of mixing medicines and putting them into phials. I told him about Michael taking, for his heart, a drug made from foxgloves.

"I know, I know; the trouble is to calculate the dose. We know so little! A month ago I watched my poor little son die, and did not know the reason, much less the cure. If I had another hundred years for learning, it would be too short . . ."

I apologised for distracting him, and rose to go. "No, stay!" he said. "It is a pleasure to have a visitor who talks Italian. I must confess I have never mastered French. Tell me, what do you think of Geneva?"

"It seems to be full of hard-working people."

He smiled. "You miss the pleasures of Venice? Will you be going back there?"

"No. I'm a Catholic, but the Inquisition . . ."

"What, you too? And you can't go back to England?"

"Not yet."

"Then you're like the rest of us. You may find fault with Geneva, but . . . Where else is there to go?"

I said I was thinking of Naples, and told him why.

"A cousin you have never seen! But why not? You may have the good luck I had with my brother."

"Your brother?" And then I remembered. "Marco said I should ask you to tell me the story of your life."

"But it will hardly interest you! I come from Amalfi, south of Naples. I suppose you have never been there."

"Yes I have," I said. "When I was young I travelled along that coast, in a trading vessel. We put into Amalfi, at a harbour half in ruins."

"What year would that be?"

"It was autumn . . . I think 1539."

"Oh, not long after the earthquake. That was what ruined the harbour. Did you land?"

"Yes. I remember a cathedral with arches intertwined, more Saracen than Christian. I remember a piazza and a fountain, and the carvings on the fountain falling away into dust. And a castle in ruins . . . But still there were splendid houses and palaces, rising one above the other up the mountainside. I followed a strange road, all steeps and steps, and whenever I grew tired of climbing I looked down, into a purring valley full of mills, or along the coast, where the white villages lay. At last I came to Ravello, a town of palaces. But the palaces were falling away with neglect, and there was no marketing done in the market place. I could see another town on a hill not far away; when I asked the name of it an old woman told me: 'Scala.' I thought that strange, to call a town a staircase. The old woman said: 'Don't go there; the people are all beggars!' Then she held out her own skinny hand. When I came back to the harbour I found the ship ready to sail. The captain said he had nothing to stay for; there was no money to be made in Amalfi."

Dr. Bologna sighed, and said: "It was different when I was a child." Then he told me the story.

7

Amalfi (said Dr. Bologna) was a fine place when I was born there, in 1501. I was brought up in a luxurious convent. The nuns told me I was an orphan, but I never thought that sad. I had all the toys a child could want. And almost every day a most beautiful lady came to put me to bed, and play with me for a little time before I slept. I called her: "Signora Duchessa." The nuns told me that this was the Duke's mother. I saw the young Duke of Amalfi sometimes, going in state through the town, on his white horse, with his bodyguard and his courtiers. He was a boy two years older than myself. His father had died before he was born, and his mother governed as regent. I have heard since that Amalfi never had a better ruler. She was so thrifty that within five years of her husband's death she had paid off the seventeen thousand ducats he owed. When the plague broke out she did not run away to some country place. Nor did she let any of her people run away. She said that would only spread the plague. Instead, she called Amalfi's Parliament together, and made sure that officers were appointed to patrol the roads and harbours, so that no infected material could come in. They cleaned the streets, too, and burned all infected bedding. I can remember the plague, but I can't remember our other great calamity – the Spanish invasion. The Duchess could not fight; Amalfi was only a part of the Kingdom of Naples, and the King had surrendered. She had neither army nor navy to withstand the Spaniards, and yet she made very good terms for her son. His powers to rule and administer justice within his own territory were to be preserved intact. At first the Spaniards tried to introduce their Inquisition. They sent a Dominican to Maiori; he stirred up the people, and burned five so-called witches. But then the Duchess sent him packing.

Forgive me, Signor Vaughan; I am straying from my story. I wanted you to understand that this Duchess, Giovanna d'Aragona, was not only a famous beauty, but the best ruler of her time. I did

not then think it strange that a lady with so much to do should have time, almost every day, to visit me, to sing to me, to look at my copy-books . . . Nor did I think to wonder, when the nuns showed me a new baby, and said this was my brother. Later there was another new baby, my sister. And then I did begin to ask how this could be, if I had no parents.

When the Duchess could not come, the Major-domo of her household came instead. I called him "Signore". He was very tall and very strong. He had been an officer in the Army of Naples, and had won a name as a great warrior, but he was always gentle with us children. He taught me and my Little brother to ride and fence and swim; he told us stories out of Greek and Latin books. My baby sister, too young to understand a word of the stories, used to sit on his knee while he told them, and watch his face with her big dark eyes. I remember once my brother and I burst out laughing, because she looked so foolish as her head nodded asleep against his arm.

There was a day when he did not come, and I heard that he had gone away. Nobody would tell us children when he was coming back. I was now nine years old, and beginning to make sense of the glances and the whisperings around me.

A few weeks later the nuns began suddenly to bustle about us children and make us ready for a long journey. The Duchess, they said, was going on a pilgrimage to Loreto, and she wanted us to go too.

She did indeed take us to Loreto, but then, instead of going back to Amalfi, we all went on to Ancona. And there to meet us was the man we children adored—the Duchess' Major-domo, Antonio Bologna. And, as we ran to embrace him, so did the Duchess. "He is my husband," she told her assembled servants, "and these are our three children, born in Christian wedlock." Then she explained that her two brothers had got wind of the marriage, and had hired men to kill Antonio. She had sent him to Ancona to save his life. But then she had found she could not live without him, and she had decided to lose her rank as Duchess, and live simply as the wife of the man she loved.

She kept her old nurse with her, and told her other servants to go back and do their duty to the young Duke. She had left him, and Amalfi, in the care of his tutor, Pirro del Pezzo. A good man;

he died only recently, and to the end of his life he served the Duke honestly and well. The Duchess, you see, had the quality of a good ruler—she always chose excellent servants.

And now that all her rule was in one small household, now that we children could call her our mother, and Antonio our father, was there any family in the world more happy than we were? The vision I have had, all my life long, that even such poor sinners as we are might learn to live in peace together, that this life here on earth might be made a Paradise—this vision was implanted in me then, during that winter we spent in Ancona.

Why it was not longer, why we could not be left in peace, you cannot understand unless you know the workings of the Church. One of my mother's brothers was the Marquis of Gerace. It was a great title, but he had no power, so far north as Ancona.

It was her second brother who had power. I must explain that these were half-brothers. Their father, Enrico di Gerace, was a bastard son of King Ferdinand of Naples. Following his father's example, this Enrico had three children by three different ladies. One—Carlo, the Marquis of Gerace—was legitimate. My mother was not. It was not her fault that she was born the bastard daughter of a bastard son. But she would have been to blame, surely, if she had considered that this birth made her too noble to marry an honest gentleman. Yet that was what her brothers thought. The Marquis of Gerace was not more venomous than her second brother, Ludovico, who like herself was illegitimate.

The laws of the Church forbid a bastard to become even a simple priest. But noble blood makes up for everything, and Pope Alexander Borgia made Ludovico a Cardinal. That was why he had power. He had only to speak to his fellow Cardinal, Sigismondo Gonzaga, who was Papal Legate in Ancona, and we were given a fortnight to leave the city.

It was not yet spring. We made a long, hard journey over the mountains, and took refuge in Siena. But the Governor there had a brother, Cardinal Petrucci, who was also under the influence of Cardinal Ludovico d'Aragona. We were expelled again, and this time our move was more hasty. Indeed, it was a flight. My mother was warned that her implacable brother, Cardinal d'Aragona, was sending a force of armed men to seize us all.

There was only one place where we could go. One state in Italy

dares to slam its gates in the face of a Cardinal. Venice! If only my parents had gone there first! But they had no friends there, and it is a long journey from the south of Italy. We moved slowly. My little brother and sister, being too small for such long riding, were carried in a horse-litter, under the care of two grooms. My mother, pregnant again, rode on a quiet, ambling horse, and her old nurse on one equally slow. My father and I had good horses, but we had to rein them back to the pace of the rest.

We were so very nearly safe! We had ridden through Ferrara, and the River Po was glittering ahead. We were almost at the gates of Pontelagoscuro, the first Venetian town. And then, from out of the city gate of Ferrara, the armed men came riding. Even a mile away, we could see the crimson of the Cardinal's livery.

"Ride!" my mother cried out to my father. "Take the boy, and ride, and be safe!"

He answered: "I won't leave you to those ruffians."

But she said: "It's you they want to kill! My brothers won't hurt me—their own sister, and pregnant! They won't hurt their own nephew and niece. Quick, for God's sake!"

Still my father would not leave her side. So she called to me: "Federico! Gallop!"

I had always obeyed her, and I did so now. She was a clever woman; she knew that, once my father saw me galloping, he would gallop after me to see that I came to no harm. So we reached the bridge, and the gate of Pontelagoscuro, and the Venetians brought the portcullis down after us. Not that they knew who we were, but they did not like the look of our pursuers. We looked back from our safety, and saw those armed men surround my mother.

They did not seem to show her any rudeness. They bowed low to her, and spoke gently. We saw her nod, and turn her horse back towards Ferrara. Then she looked round, and waved, as if to tell us that all was well. The nurse, and the litter with the children, followed. The armed men escorted them all courteously.

But my father was shouting and weeping and crying out to the Venetians to help him rescue his wife. They refused; they would not move one inch beyond their own territory. Too much blood, they told him, had been shed over that frontier. My father would have ridden out alone, but, seeing the mood he was in, they kept

the portcullis locked. They took his sword away, because nobody, except officers of the law, may carry a sword on Venetian territory.

My father disputed and pleaded with the captain of the garrison until nightfall. At midnight we were joined by one of my mother's grooms, who had managed to escape. He told us that her brother's men had promised to do her no harm. They meant only to escort her back to Amalfi, where her eldest son, the Duke, was fretting for her. He was, after all, only a boy of twelve.

Though the Venetians treated us kindly, and agreed that by every law of God and man my father was entitled to the possession of his wife and children, they could not suggest any way of enforcing this law. My father sent appeals to Rome, but in vain; Pope Julius the Second cared more for Cardinal d'Aragona than he did for Christian marriage. Of course in those days nobody had heard of Luther; we were, as they say, good Catholics. But I heard my father curse all Cardinals and all Popes.

If there is no justice in Italy, there is vengeance. My father took me to Milan—it was under French protection then—and prepared to join in the next French invasion of Southern Italy.

I can see by your face, Signor Vaughan, that you know what war has done to my country. Believe me, my father knew this too. He had given up the military life when he was young, because he hated killing. But, like so many other Italians, he had no redress against an intolerable wrong.

The noblemen of Milan received us with kindness. A great lady, Ippolita Bentivoglio, offered to look after me while my father went to the wars. I remember one evening we spent at her house. Everyone took turns at singing to the lute. My father had a very beautiful voice. When it came to his turn, he sang a sad love song —one I have heard many times, but never sung with such yearning, such despair. Everyone in the room was in tears.

After the song a priest called Matteo Bandello, who knew all the gossip of Milan, came up to my father and told him he was in great danger. A famous captain of condottieri had been asked to kill him. He had refused, but there were others not so scrupulous. Then the priest added: "For God's sake leave Milan! You cannot help your wife and children; they are already in Heaven."

My father would not believe it. Nor would I. Neither of us

could endure to think that, when we galloped away from my mother, we had left her and the two children to a cruel death.

My father knew that my mother had been taken to Amalfi. He thought that, since she had not written to him, she must be a prisoner. He saw himself leading a surprise attack by sea, storming the castle, and setting my mother free. Then her brothers would be reconciled to the marriage. Already they were sending him friendly messages, asking him to go to Rome and discuss the matter. He thought he would go – but with the French Army. He began to drill as other officers did, with a new kind of light pistol.

Only he did not take his pistol with him to Mass. It was just in front of Milan Cathedral they caught him – a band of murderers, every one of whom escaped. In their haste they forgot to murder me. When the bystanders dragged me off my father's body, they thought I had been stabbed as well. It was his blood. It was my father's blood that streamed across my breast.

So I was orphaned in reality. The news about my mother was true, of course. She, and her old nurse, and my brother and sister, had been strangled in the keep of Amalfi Castle. All Italy knew it was done at her brothers' orders, and neither the Pope, nor the Spanish rulers of Naples, made the least move to bring them to justice. Only this I will say for the Spaniards; they did not let my uncles profit from their crime. They put a Spanish governor over Amalfi; he protected the young Duke and his tutor, and kept my uncles out.

Ippolita Bentivoglio hid me in her house. When there was fighting round Milan she sent me to Padua, and entered me at the University. I am grateful to her for that, and for many kindnesses, but most of all because she did not teach me that it was my duty to take vengeance.

I *did* seek vengeance, but not of the common sort. My enemy, I thought, was not my uncle the Cardinal, but the Church which had given him his power. For a time I hated the very name of Christ. I was not alone in this. Since Padua is on Venetian territory, we students had great freedom of speech, and we talked endlessly of the glories of pagan Greece and Rome. What had our present teachers to offer us, we asked, that could compare with Greek philosophy?

I was not penniless, my father having left some diamonds, which

Ippolita Bentivoglio sold for me. After her death I heard that my father's grave in Milan was neglected. So I brought his body to Padua, and had it re-interred in the Church of the Carmelite Friars, under a Latin inscription which I composed in the style of those days. I did not mention Christ—only Mars, the god of war, and Antenor, the Trojan hero who is supposed to have founded Padua, and the Euganeans, who in Roman times inhabited Northern Italy. I would write it differently today, but these words I would not change: "To whom neither present nor future ages will provide an equal." Though I have lived fifty-seven years, I have not yet found a man to match my father.

It was Luther who set me free from paganism. Not that I liked all I heard of Luther. But his challenge to the Church, and the hot arguments among the students, made me study the New Testament. You know as well as I do, Signor Vaughan, what an unknown book the Bible is, to anyone with a Catholic education. I could scarcely believe what I read—for example, that the early Christians held all their goods in common. Some of my fellow-students contended that this was the only way for true Christians to live. I heard of schemes for an ideal community, where there would be neither riches nor poverty, neither persecutor nor victim, neither oppressor nor oppressed. My own visions were more modest. To me the ideal city was a place which would have allowed my mother and father to live.

But other things were foremost in my mind. In my own study—medicine—the Church treats the works of Galen as Holy Writ, although Galen was no saint. He was a pagan Roman who gained his knowledge by watching the death agonies of gladiators. No doubt he was the greatest doctor of his day, but in my time—fourteen centuries later—there were voices raised to say that we should dissect real human bodies, and find out whether Galen was right. He said the blood flowed from the right ventricle of the heart into the left. Nobody had ever discovered a passage by which it could, but because of Galen we were taught that the blood seeped through "invisible pores". To believe this was as necessary to salvation as to believe that the Sacramental bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ. The Sacrament you may argue over till Doomsday, but those invisible pores could be proved a lie. Bodies were dissected, experiments were made, and

soon we all knew what only one man has ever dared to write down – that the blood passes from the right side of the heart to the left through the lungs.

The only bodies we could legally dissect were those of executed criminals, and suicides. I remember once cutting open the body of a drowned woman, and thinking she had good reason to kill herself. She was pregnant, and she had the pox. But when I came to examine the embryo – a four-month one – I found it perfect, without a trace of the malformations usual in the children of infected mothers. I consulted the great Dr. Fracastoro, who first described the pox, and then I began to inquire – could the child be born healthy, if the mother were cured of pox early in pregnancy? I am sure it could be, *if* she were cured. The trouble is that, as I soon discovered, all the usual cures are useless. Whether treated or not, the disease will go away, but it will always come back. Moreover, the clap, which everyone makes light of, is incurable too. It is the clap which leads to babies being born blind.

For twenty years I worked in the women's pox hospital of Venice. I learned more and more, but never enough to save children from being born blind, or deformed, or dead.

The saddest thing was that these women, for whom I could do nothing, were always grateful. The Venetian courtesans are treated as queens, praised for their singing and their witty talk, until the day comes when they can no longer hide the signs of the pox. Who wants to listen to their witty conversation then? Nobody could bear to be near them, but me. To show their gratitude, they used to make me little things – purses and gloves – which I did not fear to take from their hands, as the pox is not spread that way. Sometimes these whores were the only people who would comfort some poor innocent young bride, infected by her husband, unable to believe what had happened to her. I used to hear the weeping of those girls, whenever I heard wedding bells. Again and again I petitioned the Doge and Senate to close the brothels and make it known to the people that there was no cure for the pox. They would not do it. The Venetian Republic makes three hundred thousand crowns a year by taxing its prostitutes. This gay Venice that you hanker for is a plague pit, believe me.

My petitions were useless. My work was useless, except that I could alleviate pain a little. When I asked myself why I went on doing this, I could not find any answer that would satisfy a pagan philosopher. But there was an answer in the Gospels. I bought an Italian translation, and began to carry it with me everywhere.

Outside my work, I was very shy of women. When you have seen so much naked female flesh, eaten away with sores and chancres, you are not very easily allured. For a time I had a mistress, who kept house for me. I am afraid I did not treat her kindly; when I came home from work, the kindness was drained out of me. She would try to talk, and I would tell her not to chatter. I had a bad temper, I think, because of my own bad conscience. I was treating this human soul as a thing put on earth for my comfort. And yet I could not bring myself to marry her; her talk was tedious and shrill. It was my fault she left me for another man.

After that, whenever I thought of marriage, I thought how little I had to offer a bride. I would have been a very rich man, if I had pretended I knew a cure for the pox. But to say there is no cure is a sure way to keep your pockets empty. It made some doctors hate me, too.

I had very good and faithful friends. Marco Rafael was the best. Whenever I was weary and discouraged, I would go to see him, and we would read Erasmus' Greek Testament together, and he would help me over the hard places.

I thought sometimes of the only kinsman I had in the world—my half-brother, the Duke of Amalfi. But just as you, Signor Vaughan, are wary of approaching your cousin, so I was very shy of going to see him. He was, you see, a great man. Besides his dukedom he had the rank the Emperor gave him—Captain-General of Siena. He governed the town, and was responsible for the Emperor's army there.

When I was turned forty, at the New Year of 1542, I heard that the Emperor had deprived him of this post. You know how in Venice you hear all the gossip of the world. They said my brother had always governed well; he had tried to keep the balance between the factions of Siena. Yet one faction hated him so much that there would be no peace till he was gone.

So my brother was on his way back to Amalfi, an unhappy, disappointed man. And now—now I felt that I could go to see him. As it happened, a young doctor whom I had trained was willing to take my post at the hospital. So I set out, in my shabby old doctor's robe. I was often delayed on the road, by people asking my help. They could not always pay me, but nobody robbed me, either.

When I came to the door of the Amalfi Palace in Naples, I told the servants: "I am Federico Bologna, the Duke's half-brother."

He did not believe me, and yet he consented to see me. He questioned me a long time. I described to him what clothes he had worn, and what horse he had ridden, when he was a boy. I described our mother, and her way of talking. And suddenly I remembered a lullaby that she had sung to me. Words and music, it came to me as clear as if I had heard it that instant. At the sound of it, he took me in his arms.

I thought we should never have done talking. He said: "I wish we had met years ago! I hated my uncles, for murdering my mother, but I hated her too, because she deserted me for this other family. I never knew till now that they lured her back to Amalfi by saying that I was fretting for her. I *was* fretting, but I thought she did not care. Now at last I can make peace with my mother's ghost."

Later he asked me why I had not sought him out before. "I thought you must have died," he told me. "Every remote cousin, every servant of a cousin, who could concoct any sort of claim on me, came to me in the days of my greatness. Why did you wait until I was a ruined man, and could do nothing for you?"

I told him I had spent my life with the most wretched of human beings; I did not think that I should feel at ease with perfectly contented people.

He laughed and said that there were no such people. And certainly he needed comfort now. I must stay with him; I must have new clothes from his own tailor. He presented me to his wife, Costanza d'Avalos. I had heard of her already, because her beautiful poems have been printed in Venice. When I told her that I had read them, she was amazed. "I have almost forgotten them myself," she said. "I have not written anything for years; I have no time." Besides bearing seven children (two of whom

died) she had ruled Amalfi during all the years that my brother was in Siena. He used to come back to his Dukedom only once a year. "But now that I'm home for good," he said, "I shall still leave the affairs of Amalfi to her. She knows them better than I do."

She said to me: "If only I could have kept things in such good order as your mother did! But we have been almost overwhelmed with misfortunes."

The Duke and Duchess took me in their own ship to Amalfi. This was almost three years after you saw it, Signor Vaughan. I had been wondering, all the way, whether I could bear to look at the castle where my mother had been murdered. Except for one fragmentary tower, it was not there. The earthquake had shattered it, and the Duchess was using the stones to repair the harbour.

Even the memory of my mother's tragedy had been wiped out by fresh disasters. The Duchess, when she had leisure, told me them one by one. Nothing, she said, had gone right since 1528, when the French marched on Naples. A French fleet, allied with one from Genoa, stormed Amalfi from the sea, as my father had dreamed of doing. The French and Genoese sailors robbed the people, but what the land forces did was far worse. They besieged Naples, and cut the aqueducts. The people inside Naples did not die of thirst; they had some wells. But the ruined aqueducts poured water across the plain where the besiegers were encamped. The ground became swampy, and the French began to die of malaria. Peasant women, whose homes the Army had destroyed, wandered into the camp to beg for food. Soon the pox was taking its usual toll. Then a new plague, the typhus, broke out inside Naples. It killed sixty thousand of the besieged, and soon spread to the besiegers. The French Army of thirty-five thousand men had been reduced to four thousand, by the time it was forced to retreat.

The typhus did not retreat. It spread to Amalfi. The Duchess did her best to follow my mother's example. But nothing could stop the universal panic. There were not enough lawyers for the people who wanted to make their wills. In the end they took the wills down as abbreviated notes.

The typhus did not die out altogether for a year. After the typhus came the Spaniards. They took reprisals against everyone

who had supported the French. The Duchess was able to persuade them that Amalfi had always been on their side. But Scala (which was at odds with the rest of the Dukedom) had sworn allegiance to the French King. It was because of the fine the Spaniards levied on Scala that the surviving inhabitants, as you heard, Signor Vaughan, were brought to beggary.

And then the earthquake . . . These disasters were long over, when I came back to Amalfi. But the Turkish pirates had begun to harry that whole coast, as they do to this day.

People who live through such things grow callous even to the suffering before their eyes. They were not likely to brood on a tale of thirty years before. Yet I could not bear to think that it was as if they had never been—my mother, her old nurse, my little brother, and the girl who had nodded asleep on my father's arm. Not even the earthquake had uncovered their bodies. My brother told me that he knew they had been buried within the castle, but he had never been able to find the place. Even so, I thought he should put up a monument.

"It would have to be a monument without an inscription," he said. "The Church cannot bear any mention of Cardinal d'Aragona's crimes, and you know how powerful the Church is here."

I had already seen the signs of the Church's power, in every place ruled by the Spaniards. It was not to be seen, however, in the lives of either Duke or Duchess. They attended Mass (as I did) when they could not avoid it. They showed me over their palace, and I saw that the Duchess had no private chapel and no altar in her own room. All her poems were pious. "Across life's immensities, guide the wretched wandering soul to the true path!" And yet she seemed never to speak of religion.

She did speak of practical good works. Amalfi had two hospitals —one a monastery with a saintly abbot, which had been ruined ever since the typhus, and one a convent, cared for by some lazy, stupid nuns. The Duchess eagerly sought my advice about improving both places.

I admired her more every day. I remarked to my brother that he had had extraordinary good fortune, in finding such a wife. He said he knew that well; he loved her, and he loved his children. "And yet," he said, "I find I cannot be faithful to her. She

forgives me; she forgives me every time. I can see in her face what anguish I cause her, and yet I feel – I know – I shall do it again. Or do you think I shall reform, now that I'm home for good?"

I said the ways of married men had always been mysterious to me. I thought that if I ever found a woman who would love me, and whose talk did not weary me, I would be enraptured afresh, every day, by the miracle of her presence.

"Then you've never been married!" he said. "That is one thing I can do for you. You shall have the most beautiful bride in Amalfi!"

But when he spoke to the Duchess of this proposed bride, the Duchess warned me that she did not mean to marry the girl off against her will. This was her ward, an orphan of the noble di Salerno family. She was a god-daughter of the Duchess, and had the same name—Costanza. Her parents had died of the typhus when she was five. The Duchess had brought her up, and loved her like one of her own daughters. Though she had gone to great trouble to find the girl proper suitors, and had presented two or three young noblemen to her, the Duchess always accepted the girl's refusal. She told me: "I will never force her into unhappiness."

This, I thought, was an end of the matter. If the girl had already refused young men, she would not want me, a man past forty. Yet the Duchess was not so sure. She said that, in my new clothes, I looked very handsome. At least it would do no harm to let me see the girl. While young Costanza sat in a walled garden, learning to play the lute, I was allowed to peep from an upper window.

The sight struck me with panic. How could I dare even to speak to this glorious virgin, whose head was carried so proudly, whose hands touched the lute with such cunning? What did I say, as a rule, when meeting a young woman? "Are your sores very painful today?" That would hardly do.

The Duchess assured me that I had no need to be shy. "The girl is not really proud," she said. But Costanza looked at me proudly, when we met face to face, the next day, in the walled garden. There was a maid in attendance, of course, and the Duchess herself was not far away, but what we said could be private if we spoke softly. I mumbled some compliment about the

roses which twined on the wall above her. What I said sounded foolish even to me. Her face was not in the least like a blushing rose. There is a kind of pallor which is perfectly healthy; it makes a handsome face look like marble, yet alive. I groped for better words, but Costanza cut me short.

"There is no need for that!" she said, speaking low, but very firmly. "I know why you are here, and I must tell you at once—I shall never marry any man who does not accept the Gospel."

. *Accept the Gospel* . . . It was the very phrase of the Venetian Protestants. And yet this was a girl of eighteen, brought up as noblewomen are, out of the world, secluded in the courtyard of the great lady who protected her. In a daze I asked her: "Who taught you that way of talking?"

Her eyes widened in anger, and she said: "Are you asking me to betray my friends?"

Not only the phrases, but the very tone, the look, of my old friends from Padua University. I could not help smiling from pure happiness. She thought I was laughing at her, and grew angrier still.

"Come, come!" I said. "I will not pester you with love talk, because I know you are too beautiful for me, and more than twenty years too young. Let us only sit side by side, and look at this book which I keep in my pocket." I took out my little Italian Gospel to show her.

She asked: "But do you keep it with you superstitiously, for luck? Or do you read it?"

I handed her the book and told her to begin reading anywhere she liked, and see whether I could go on from memory. The book fell open at my favourite place in St. Matthew. She read: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?"

I went on. "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

To show her why those words echoed always in my mind, I told her everything—about my mistress, even about the pox hospital,

though these were strange topics for a young girl. She never took her wide grey eyes off my face, and when I stopped she begged me to tell her more. And then at last she said: "I see that you have lived—not as everybody lives, with the body, but with the mind as well. Do you believe, like Socrates, that the unexamined life is not worth living?"

"Yes," I said.

"Now tell me one more thing. With all this learning you have—when you read the Gospel, can you see any evidence that the Pope is Vicar of Christ on earth?"

I said cautiously: "There is some evidence, if you construe the words of Christ to Peter in that way." Then I added that many good people were working to reform the Church from within.

"They will never succeed!" she said. "This whole edifice of lies and cruelty and murder—it must be torn down! All of it!"

I was inclined to agree, but I still wondered how she could have learned to think so. Now she was willing to tell me. Both the Duchess and Costanza's aunt, the Countess of Pescarola, belonged to a circle of noble ladies converted to Protestantism by a Spanish priest, Juan Valdes. None of them had openly defied the Church. They thought the Mass and other public ceremonies did not matter, so long as they could hold their prayers and Bible readings in private. "Do you think we are cowardly?" Costanza asked me. "The Duchess believes that she can do most good by governing Amalfi—which of course the Spaniards would not let her do, if she were openly a heretic."

I said that was my own reason for conforming to the Church—not to save life, but to save my work. Yet I had often felt my soul in peril through the lies I had to tell to seem a Catholic. Every argument, for and against, was familiar to her. Each of us could complete the other's broken sentences.

We had by now been talking for many hours. I was aware of the maid clicking her knitting needles, and of someone peeping from a window, but nobody interrupted. We talked until the Duke and Duchess came to tell us that it was time for supper.

Then Costanza rose, and curtseyed to them both, and said: "I am grateful to you, for your kindness to me since I was a child. But you have never done me a better turn than this—to find me such a husband."

I could not believe it. I could not see what I had done, to make this wonderful creature love me. But she swore that, if I would not have her, she would go into a convent. "And I hate nuns!" So we kneeled down, side by side, and my brother gave us his blessing.

Afterwards the Duchess told me that, in all her troubles with Amalfi's money and her own, she had kept Costanza's dowry inviolate. It was a country estate—not a rich one, for there are no riches left in Amalfi—but still, with its well-watered vineyards and its fishing rights, not poor. Costanza kept it in good order, while I practised my profession. God knows that region gave me material to continue my study of the pox! There was an outbreak of bubonic plague, too, and this puzzled me. Unless you believe in magic, or the influence of the stars, you must believe that the plague is passed on by touching. Yet I have seen a plague-stricken ship anchor only to take on fresh food and water. The barrels of water were thrown aboard; so was the food. Nobody touched the sailors, and a close watch was kept to see that they did not land. Yet, after the ship had sailed, the plague broke out in Amalfi. I was puzzling over this one day, as I walked by the harbour, and then I saw a rat run down a ship's rope, and come ashore.

Nobody has ever seen a rat with plague. But isn't it possible they may carry infection from one human creature to another? The Duchess had already ordered the cleaning of the streets; this is done all over Italy, whenever plague breaks out. People have a general notion that the dirt may make it worse. But, if the infection is carried by rats, the houses too must be cleaned, and every hole stopped up, and every scrap of rubbish a rat might feed on properly buried—not when the plague breaks out, but all the time. It was hard to persuade the people to this, but the Duchess did her best, and the plague did indeed die down.

The next summer, there was an outbreak of typhus. Like the plague, it broke out in the hottest weather, when the streams which reach Amalfi from the mountains had almost run dry. The people (like the people of Naples, when the aqueducts were cut) had water enough to drink, but not to wash in. Nor could they wash their clothes. We take it for granted that the poor are verminous, but may it not be these vermin which carry typhus? I persuaded the people to wash themselves and their clothes in the sea. This made me very unpopular. The sea water spoiled the colours of the

clothes, and did not always kill the vermin. As for washing their own bodies in the sea, they thought this an indecent heathen custom. Still, some of the young fishermen came to enjoy it, and even copied the gentry, by learning to swim.

With all these troubles, the two years I spent in Amalfi were very happy. My rash boast, before I was married, has been fulfilled. Every day I wake to thank God for this miracle—that I have Costanza beside me. We have lived through great hardship together. Having to flee from Amalfi was bad enough, especially since it was all my fault. I had said in priestly company that Galen was wrong about the circulation of the blood. The Duchess warned us just in time. We set sail in a fishing boat by night, with what little money I had and Costanza's jewels. She knew that her estate would be seized when she fled, but that only made her laugh. She was brimming with happiness because at last we could drop the mask and live according to our consciences. It was not an easy journey; we had to put in at Sorrento, and find a bigger ship. While we were at the inn there, disguised and using false names, we heard a little girl, barely six years old, being savagely cursed. This was an orphaned niece of the innkeeper. He made her stagger to and fro with heavy buckets, and beat her when she fell. Costanza could not bear it; she loved children all the more because we had none of our own. She said we must take the child with us. I was angry; I said our flight was hard enough, and dangerous enough, already. I said she was talking as if she were mistress of her estate, going about among her peasants and her fishermen, reconciling one man with his wife, another with his son; taking orphans into the house and telling the servants to feed them . . . How could she embrace a life of poverty, if she had not considered what poverty would mean? And so, for the first time, I made my Costanza cry. Her tears reminded me of the women in the pox hospital. I knew the little girl would finish there—where else, if she were brought up to be the common drudge of an inn? So I agreed that she would be better off sharing our poverty and our danger. The innkeeper sold her to us—our little Rosa—like a Turk selling a slave. And then at last we found a ship going northwards, and were ready to embark, when Costanza's aunt, the Countess, caught up with us. An Archbishop had questioned her about our flight; she had lost her temper and told him that

she would be better off in Geneva. So the time had come for her too to pick up her jewels and flee. Like Costanza, she was glad. We were all set on seeing Geneva. We had heard so much of it, and hoped so much; it was our shining city, our Promised Land. After almost a year of wandering, we reached it; and as we approached the city gate —

8

"What happened then?" I asked. I had been all this while no less delighted with the story than with the man who told it me. Looking at his gentle face, I longed to hear him say that it had all turned out well, that he was now settled in a place he loved. But he broke off, and called a greeting to his wife. She, with Rosa and the Countess, had come back from the shops.

After welcoming me, Costanza Bologna caught sight of herself in the looking-glass. I thought it was a picture worth lingering over. But she turned away, and called Rosa. The girl came running. She was a little sunburned, a little flushed from gadding about in the hot afternoon. When she came face to face with herself, her lips parted in utter amazement. It was only for a moment; presently, as girls do, she began to find fault with her appearance, tucking away a wisp of hair, and smoothing her collar down. But that first look of wonder at her own beauty repaid me for all I had spent.

I observed something rarer. The old Countess had followed Rosa in. She and Costanza watched the girl, and then they exchanged a glance which was all of delight. The jealousy which almost every older woman shows, when confronted with a young beauty, was altogether absent. Costanza's face in particular was so gentle that I wondered how I could ever have thought it hard.

The women told me my present could not have come at a better time. "We have been buying the stuff to make Rosa's wedding dress," the Countess explained. "Not that real wedding dresses are permitted here! It will be an ordinary dress, but new. The old glass we have upstairs is so dim and so speckled, I was afraid Rosa would not be able to see how the colour suited her skin."

"You can hardly call that a colour," said Costanza, shaking out the yards of sombre blue stuff. "If only we could dress her all in white! Never mind, Rosa! You shall have a fresh white collar to show off your face."

They begged me to stay to supper. "On condition that it's plain bread and cheese," I said. I told them how much I had enjoyed my workman's dinner.

"Then you'll be disappointed here," said Costanza. "We have stew. It's been cooking all this time—unless the fire's gone out."

She invited me into the kitchen, to see for myself. When she took the lid off the pot, there was an enchanting smell of herbs and onions and beef. But the fire was indeed almost out, until she rattled the poker between the bars. This gesture moved me very much. Her hands worked swiftly, and yet they were still the hands which had been trained to touch nothing harsher than a lute.

She looked up suddenly from the fire and asked: "What was it the Marquis of Oria said to you?"

I began to tell her.

"Oh, not his philosophy!" she said. "I've heard all that. Did he mention my husband, or me?"

"No, but he said there were some good Italians living here."

"Have you told Galeazzo that?"

"No. As you seemed uneasy, last night, when the matter was mentioned, I thought I had better say as little as possible."

"Did I seem uneasy?" She looked at me mistrustfully, and then burst out: "Oh, it's all nonsense! You may tell Galeazzo whatever you like. He thinks, because my husband and I went to Basle last year . . . We did *not* go on purpose to see the Marquis of Oria. Only we did happen to meet him, and . . . the fact is, under all that philosophising, he has a generous heart. Tell me, when you had supper together, who paid for it?"

"He did."

"You see? Oh, I don't defend his . . . polygamy. But he treats those two girls a great deal better than John Knox treats his lawful wife."

I asked her to tell me more about John Knox.

"There! I've been gossiping again! My husband is always telling me . . ."

Rosa came running to say that Galeazzo had come. He looked hot and flustered.

"So there you are!" he said to me. "I've been searching for you all over the town. Quick! We can just be there in time if we leave now. Didn't I tell you that Maître Calvin wanted to see you?"

"I am sorry," I said. "I had forgotten . . . But surely you did not say any particular time?"

"I couldn't find you to tell you. It's to be five o'clock."

"Save some stew for me if I'm late!" I said to Costanza.

Galeazzo frowned. "Are you having supper here? Why?"

Costanza's face was once more like a stone. To soften it, I said: "This lady has not only done me the honour of inviting me, she has let me smell a stew which I would not miss for the world."

"Oh, if you've promised . . ." said Galeazzo. "But hurry!"

As we turned into the cobbled Cathedral Square, he said: "I know that you can't help it, in view of this wedding—but you should be careful not to see too much of that family. I suppose they've been talking to you about Servetus."

"Who's Servetus?" I asked.

"Oh, well, if you don't know that . . . An adventurer. Just a wandering adventurer. Made himself out to be a doctor. You can tell what sort of a doctor he was; he wrote in one of his books that the blood circulates from left to right through the lungs."

. As we entered the Rue des Chanoines a plump little woman of about forty came out of her house and curtseyed to us. Galeazzo introduced her to me as: "Madame Anne Framéry, of Rouen, a widow who has come here for the sake of the Gospel."

She smiled at me and said in French: "I am so glad Monsieur le Marquis found you in time!"

We parted from her then, with a formal exchange of compliments. No more was needed. I know that look on a woman's face—the pride of ownership. This was Galeazzo's mistress. Why not? He must have one, since his wife would not live with him.

A few steps farther on we came to the door of Calvin's house. Galeazzo paused, and looked at me uneasily. "You may find," he said, "that Maître Calvin and the others want to ask you . . . certain questions."

"What questions?"

"It's nothing to be afraid of. Only tell the absolute truth!"

The house was bigger than any I had yet seen in Geneva. We were ushered into a huge room, which looked like a council chamber. Indeed, some sort of a council seemed to be in session, grouped round a large table. Could Mr. Knox have split himself into a dozen Mr. Knoxes, all alike? A second glance reassured me.

None of those present were Mr. Knox; it was only that they wore the same flat black hats, the same side-pieces covering cheeks and ears, the same black beards . . . No, surely not all their beards could be black. I saw them dimly at first, having come in from the sunlight.

Not knowing which of these identical figures was Calvin, I bowed low to them all.

"*Asseyez-vous, Monsieur Vaughan!*" said the man at the head of the table.

A chair near me was vacant. I sat down, and looked round for Galeazzo. Someone was ushering him out of the door. I was left alone to face them. Why? Was I on trial?

The man at the head of the table spoke to me gently. "Welcome to Geneva! We are most grateful to you for coming here to help us."

Help them? Help that gang of heretics? I was too much taken aback to deny it.

"Are you," asked another man, "an old friend of Monsieur le Marquis?"

"No," I said. "I first met him in Venice, two or three months ago."

"Where in Venice?"

"I would rather not say."

"It is safe to say *here*," said one of them.

"I mean no disrespect to you gentlemen. But I would rather not name anyone who lives within the power of the Inquisition."

Some of them still wanted to pursue the matter. But the man at the head of the table said with a smile that my reluctance to name my friends, however inappropriate to the time and place, was at least a proof that I had formed good habits. Since all the others instantly agreed with him, I understood that this was Calvin. He was the leanest of them all, his beard the blackest, his eyes the most eagerly blinking.

I still could not make out what I was on trial for. Calvin continued to speak very courteously. But I felt the ground quake under me when he asked what my religion was. Despising myself, I stammered that I was open to conviction.

"But not yet convinced?" he said. "You are, in fact, a Papist?"

I managed to nod. He did not seem at all displeased. He went

on to ask me what had happened in the cemetery, between Galeazzo and his wife. Several of the others interrupted my narrative, with questions that seemed to show they did not believe me. Did I really speak Spanish well enough to understand what the lady had said? I went through the whole story several times, in French and Spanish—for it seemed that two or three of them knew that language. Only then did it occur to me that it must be Galeazzo who was on trial. Were they angry with him, for promising his wife her own chapel and her own priest? And was I giving evidence that would put a rope round his neck?

Impossible . . . Galeazzo himself had urged me to tell the truth. Was he, then, on trial for adultery? He might be pleading his wife's hardness of heart, as a mitigating circumstance. That would account for the little widow's anxiety. I knew Geneva had harsh laws against adulterers.

Calvin asked me: "Are you certain, then, from what you saw and heard, that Monsieur le Marquis left nothing undone which could possibly change his wife's mind?"

My fellow-feeling for all adulterous men made me assure him of this, perhaps too emphatically.

Calvin looked round the table. "No other questions?" There was a general shaking of heads.

"Then it only remains," he said, "to thank you, Monsieur Vaughan, for your attendance. I believe you are not leaving Geneva at once. We may have to trouble you again, in the next week or two."

I rose, and saw for the first time that a man had been sitting behind me, taking notes.

Outside the door, I found Galeazzo. Clearly, he had been eavesdropping, for he beamed at me, and shook me warmly by the hand.

"Why didn't you tell me," I asked, "that this was a . . . a trial?"

"Oh, not a trial!" he replied. "That's quite the wrong word. This is a religious matter. You see, according to St. Paul —"

He was then summoned, in his turn, to face Calvin. The prospect seemed to cause him no anxiety. "Till tonight!" he said cheerfully, as we parted.

Completely bewildered, I made my way back to the Bologna family. They were just about to have supper, the women along

with the men. Evidently they had adopted the ways of northern Europe. Rosa, too, was sitting down with the family. Dr. Bologna very courteously showed me to the place laid for me, but his moody wife was blowing cold again. After her husband had said grace, she made herself very busy serving out the stew, punctiliously giving me the biggest helping. I complimented her upon her cooking, but she did not respond.

Dr. Bologna said: "Signor Vaughan tells me that he is related to the new Viceroy of Naples."

"Indeed!" said the old Countess. She began to question me about my family, and to tell me that I must be connected with certain other noble families. If I went back a little way, my family tree was full of kings. She herself, she said, was intimately connected with the royal families both of Naples and of Spain. She went on to explain this in detail. Dr. Bologna seemed not to be listening. No doubt he had heard it all before. Young Rosa, as befits a bride, was lost in some dream of her own. What I could not bear was the silence of Costanza.

She broke it suddenly, asking in a cold voice: "Will you really go to Naples? You'll hardly be welcome there, once it's known that you helped Galeazzo in his divorce."

"His . . .?"

"Come, come, Signor Vaughan! We all know where you've been. And after you gave us your word that you had no such thought in your mind!"

I said stupidly: "But Calvin can't grant a divorce. He isn't the Pope."

This made them laugh. I thought of all the things which had puzzled me. The sudden warmth of Galeazzo, when he discovered that I could speak Spanish as well as French and Italian . . . His evident satisfaction, when his wife proved adamant . . . His insistence that I should come to Geneva . . . His delight with the evidence I had given . . .

I said: "That man's made a fool of me."

"Do you expect us to believe that?" said Costanza. "You have grey hairs in your beard. Can you tell us you're a child in the ways of the world?"

"The Catholic world I understand, but . . . If that was the purpose of what happened this afternoon, why did Calvin question

me about my own religion, and where I'd met Galeazzo, and how long I'd known him?"

Costanza said: "The other witnesses have been lifelong friends of Galeazzo. They've all been swearing what a good husband he was, and how tenderly he always loved his wife. Calvin believed them, but some of the other pastors thought it sounded too good to be true. They told him he must go and see his wife once more, and find a witness, if possible. He was going to see Federico's old friend, Marco Rafael, and ask him to be the witness."

"That's it!" I said. "He was begging Marco to come to Geneva, and it was only after Marco refused point-blank that he turned to me."

"Galeazzo has been telling everyone," Costanza said, "that if only the Englishman would come, he'd have just the evidence he wanted. A completely independent witness, he said—not even of the same religion. I thought you must be a right ruffian."

"You see how mistaken you are in people!" her husband said.

"Not altogether mistaken," I admitted. "But in this case I am innocent." I began to explain what had happened, and then faltered. Why, after all, had I been so ready to go to the Lido with Galeazzo? To show my daring, because he had told me he was in danger? Was I so childish? Then I remembered. "The real reason," I said, "is that he told me his wife was ruled by Spanish priests. My mother had an evil old Spanish priest, who used to set her against me." As I said it, I thought how tediously this old grudge echoed even in my own ears. A new thought occurred to me. "What would Galeazzo have done, if his wife had consented to live with him?"

"Trust him to find some way out!" said Costanza. "He would have told her to bring all six children, have them brought up as Protestants— or some other demand that she was bound to refuse. You should know how cunning Galeazzo is. Look how he fooled you! Did you really never suspect?"

"Marco Rafael warned me that something was wrong. But neither of us knew that Calvin was granting divorces."

"He never has till now," Costanza said. "That's what makes me so angry!"

Dr. Bologna put in: "You know, Signor Vaughan, there is warrant for it in St. Paul. 'But if the unbelieving depart, let him

depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases . . .' St. Paul did not say that a difference in faith alone was reason for divorce, but if the one partner absolutely refuses to live with the other . . ."

"Oh, yes!" Costanza interrupted him. "We need better laws of marriage, but we need them for everybody. Isn't that what we've always said about Geneva? The laws may be harsh here, but at least they're the same for us all. There's no such thing as a great man claiming special privileges. That is—there never has been. And now Galeazzo will be set free to marry Anne Framéry, just because he's doing this thing to us —"

The Doctor put his hand firmly on hers, and shook his head.

"Oh, very well!" she said. "I won't say why Calvin gave him this privilege, but —" Turning to me, her eyes glittering, she asked: "Do you know what our laws are like here? Do you know how the V.C.P. deals with marriage cases?"

"The V.C.P.?"

"The Venerable Company of Pastors—that flock of crows you've just met. They summoned poor old Monsieur de Bonivard and told him he was causing scandal, by keeping a young housekeeper. He protested that the girl was just his housekeeper. He called doctors to testify that he was too old."

"Not a matter of which any doctor can be certain," murmured her husband.

"Well! He was over seventy. But they made him marry her, which was against her will as much as his. The girl fell in love with a man of her own age—why not? The Pope would have annulled that false marriage, and let her marry her lover. But not the V.C.P. They beheaded the lover. Then they bound the girl hand and foot, tied on lead weights, and threw her into the lake. They think, you see, that in a case of adultery the woman is more to blame, and should have the more cruel death."

"It was not the V.C.P. who did that," observed her husband "but the magistrate."

"Oh yes; we have elected magistrates; we have the Small Council, the Council of Two Hundred, the General Citizen Assembly twice a year—a complete democracy, the best since ancient Athens. Signor Vaughan doesn't yet know what a fraud that is. He hasn't lived in Geneva."

The Doctor gently said: "Geneva has protected us for thirteen years."

"Is it thirteen years?" Costanza said. "Yes! And two months. Since the end of May 1545. We must have been out of our minds."

The bitterness in her tone reminded me of something. "Tell me," I said. "Who was Servetus?"

Costanza jumped up from the table. "Did Galeazzo tell you to ask us that?"

Her husband took her hand and made her sit down again. "*Cara cara,* we must not see enemies everywhere."

I said: "I meant no harm. It's only that when Galeazzo was begging Marco Rafael to come here, Marco, who is a gentle person, said something very bitter."

"What was it?" asked Costanza. She was trembling.

"That Calvin had burned an old friend at the stake."

Rosa's eyes had quite lost their dreamy look. The Countess told me quietly: "Miguel Serveto, or Servetus, a Spaniard, was burned here five years ago. I am afraid he was not the first."

"No, indeed!" Costanza cried out. "Do you know, Signor Vaughan, what was the first thing we saw, when we came towards the gates of Geneva? A stake, and the charred remains of human bodies! I wanted to turn back, there and then."

"We had nowhere to turn back to," her husband said. "There was nothing for it but to stay and work to make this place a little better."

I asked: "But who were these people burned at the stake?"

"Witches!" Costanza said. "That was what they told us. At first we thought we must be misunderstanding the people. None of us knew much French. But no; they truly were saying that they had burned '*des sorciers et des sorcières*'. In Italy only the peasants believe in witchcraft. At last we found a man we could understand—Sebastiano Castellio, who was headmaster of the high school then. A Savoyard, but he speaks Italian as well as French. He told us that there had been plague in the city two years running. The people always used to blame the Jews, but the Jews were turned out before Calvin's time. So now they thought it must be witchcraft! The plague was all over, when a man was arrested on Bernese territory. He was tortured, and made a confession that

he'd conspired with a Genevan called Lentille to concoct a paste, into which Lentille somehow put the venom of the plague. Then the two of them, he said, had cut one foot off a man who'd been hanged, and with this they'd rubbed the deadly paste on to the locks of the houses, and made the people inside die of the plague. The Small Council of Geneva arrested Lentille at once. They never doubted the story."

"You should explain," said the Doctor, "that this was a heritage of the past. The Prince-Bishop hanged several people for spreading the plague by witchcraft."

"But Calvin had denounced every superstition of the Prince-Bishop's time," Costanza said. "The people were no longer allowed to leave their work for saints' days and pilgrimages. The Prince-Bishop's arms were chiselled off every public building, and in their place the masons carved the watchword of the new Geneva—*'Post tenebras lux'*. After darkness, light! And here was the Small Council—twenty-five shopkeepers and merchants, practical men at their trades—the Small Council, which is tribunal and government in one, telling Lentille that he must be a sorcerer. Why didn't he confess? He said it was all nonsense, and went on saying so, even when the torturers jerked him up with ropes and let him fall down suddenly. They call that *'l'estrapade'*. The torturers were unskilful; the man died. Since he'd endured so much without confessing, the Small Council reasoned that he must have been sustained by Satan. They had his body dragged through the town and then burned. And the Elders were told to look out for anyone greasing the locks of house doors."

"You mean," I said, "for anyone greasing them with a severed human foot."

"No—simply greasing them."

"But everyone greases the locks of their doors."

"That was what Castellio tried to tell the people. They nearly killed him. As he described it to us afterwards, the people were in such a frenzy that the most commonplace actions looked in their eyes like witchcraft. Even while one wretched woman was being led to the burning, a cook rested her greasy hand on somebody's door, and the crowd instantly seized her as a witch. And Castellio could not stop them. He had been a very popular man. While the plague was at its height he was the only pastor who would visit the

dying. The people always used to jeer at Calvin because he wouldn't go near the plague hospital."

Dr. Bologna said: "Calvin was exempted by order of the Small Council."

Costanza replied: "He didn't protest at being exempted. But afterwards the people remembered that in his favour. He'd been afraid of the plague, like anyone else. Why hadn't Castellio been afraid? Wasn't that a sign he'd made a compact with the Devil? Castellio was lucky not to be arrested. Because, by the same reasoning, the Small Council arrested all the people who worked at the plague hospital. Brave people, good people—who else would do the work? The director of the hospital was tortured with red-hot pincers, until he confessed to killing five of his patients. His wife confessed to eighteen. They say those two went to their execution cheerfully; no doubt they were longing for death. By this time the Small Council had more skilful torturers, and people were confessing to everything—meeting the Devil at night, forming compacts with him, trying to poison everyone in Geneva. Two people killed themselves in prison rather than endure more torture. And all this time Castellio was begging Calvin to intervene. Because the Small Council wouldn't even see Castellio. Calvin was not as powerful then as now, but the Councillors would always listen to him. He did go to them at last. He said 'Don't give the poisoners too lingering a death.' So the Small Council told the executioner that, when he cut off the women's right hands in the market place, he should do it at one blow. And then, when he came to burn them, he should strangle them first. That was Calvin's intervention."

"Did he believe they were guilty?" I asked.

Costanza shrugged. "A learned man . . ."

"There's a difference between a learned Frenchman and a learned Italian."

"That's true," said Costanza. "The French will swallow some surprising things. But Castellio could not believe that Calvin was taken in. Calvin's own sermons, all this time, were full of warnings against Satan's wiles, full of remarks which could be taken either way, about the surprising nature of these events. But he never would preach, as Castellio asked him to, on the text: 'Thou shalt not take up a false report; thou shalt not follow a multitude to do

evil.' If Calvin really thought they had spread the plague, why should he care how cruelly they died?"

"Calvin has no use for purposeless cruelty," Dr. Bologna said. "It may have been his doing that, just as we arrived, some people were saved altogether."

"Yes, it all stopped suddenly," Costanza said. "The Small Council had thirty people executed in less than four months. The thirty-first was an exceptionally brave man. He proclaimed his innocence, and went on proclaiming it, whenever they let him stop screaming. It did him no good; he was killed like the rest. But a washerwoman who had worked at the plague hospital was hauled out of prison and told that her penalty was only exile. Then the rest were quietly released. The Small Council, and the people, were glutted with blood. I don't believe Calvin did anything to calm their fever."

"And yet when I met him, shortly afterwards," Dr. Bologna said, "he talked like a most reasonable man. He listened while I told him, through an interpreter, my own experience of the plague."

"You should explain why he listened," Costanza put in. "He'd heard you were the brother of a duke. You know, Signor Vaughan, we have no local noblemen. They ran away when the Prince-Bishop did. The Genevans boast that they're all equal citizens. But how they love a foreign title!"

Her husband gave her a reproving glance, and went on: "Just before we saw that stake outside Geneva, we'd seen people taking their water direct from the Arve – the river which we had already followed through several villages. I persuaded Calvin that what Geneva needed was a pipe laid from a clean spring in the mountains. Besides the benefits of drinking it, I said, if people have more water they will wash more often. And here I must confess I was a little cunning. Having read Calvin's *Institutes*, I knew that he liked to argue from the feelings which God has naturally implanted in our breasts. I pointed out what loathing God has made us feel for lice and fleas and rats. Isn't it possible (I said) that this may be God's warning of some harm, some infection they bring us? And how can we destroy them but by keeping our bodies clean, and our houses, and our streets? Calvin was convinced, and he convinced the Council."

"But he did not say they had been wrong before," said Costanza. "He did not say that Geneva had murdered thirty-one innocent people."

"To admit that one has been wrong is not easy for anyone—even, my dear, for you. But the city *was* cleaned; it *is* free of the plague. I wish I were so sure of my old enemy, the pox. They did a great thing here, when they closed the brothels. The pox does not spread nearly so fast here as in Venice. But people do still catch it, and they will not consult a doctor, because they are afraid of the laws against adultery. So they dose themselves in secret with various poisons—and go on spreading the pox. But at least it is accepted here that women are not merchandise. I am sure Geneva will overcome this problem, as she has overcome so many others."

"Geneva cannot overcome anything," said Costanza, "while things are done here as we know they are."

The Doctor shook his head at her. I said: "But from what you tell me, there are some fine people here. I should like to meet this Castellio."

They all looked at one another. The Doctor said: "He . . . lives in Basle. As you are a stranger here, you might find it wiser not to mention his name."

Costanza asked me suddenly: "Will you go on staying with Galeazzo?"

I said: "How can I? Now that I know what was behind his hospitality —"

Twisting her hands, she said: "But all the same, go on staying with him! Only until the wedding—that's a week from tomorrow."

"But what for?" I asked.

She murmured: "After the wedding it won't matter. You will be leaving then, in any case."

"If you are asking me to spend eight days in the company of a man whom I never did like much, and whom I now find repellent, you must at least tell me why."

She looked at her husband. He sighed, and said: "Certain . . . disagreements have arisen. We would rather that there was no open breach. If Galeazzo thinks we have incited you to quarrel with him . . ."

"But why should he think that?" I asked. "I can do my own quarrelling. If I find that a man has made a complete fool of me —"

"Oh yes, ask him for an explanation!" said Costanza. "Ask him by all means what that meeting with Calvin was for. It would look unnatural if you did *not* ask. Only, whatever his explanation is—accept it!"

The old Countess broke in. "You will have to tell Signor Vaughan what we are afraid of. The fact is—if Galeazzo takes offence, he might stop Rosa's wedding."

"How can he do that?" I asked.

"He can do anything here," said Costanza. "You saw that for yourself, this afternoon. He and Calvin are hand in glove."

I glanced at Rosa. She was pale, but not amazed.

"Whatever may become of us," Costanza went on, "is in the hands of God. But so far as we can, we must provide for Rosa. It seemed a miracle, when she found young Timothy. We Italian exiles are all great thinkers. Nothing in Heaven or Hell is hidden from us, but we cannot tell what to do with a shaky kitchen table. What a wonder to meet a religious exile who knows how to pick up a hammer! That house he's built! I feel more sure of Rosa's happiness than if she were marrying a king."

"That's not saying much," I told her. "I've seen some kings."

"But Signor Vaughan! You won't do anything to spoil this marriage?"

Rosa now spoke for the first time. "Signor Vaughan, please . . ."

I could not refuse anything to this gentle voice.

When I returned to Galeazzo's house that night, and saw him looking guiltily at me, I said, as mildly as I could: "What was happening this afternoon?"

"Didn't the Bologna family tell you?"

"I didn't ask them. I was listening to the story of Dr. Bologna's life."

"Oh, that. Yes, we've all heard that. Well, you see, Signor Vaughan, St. Paul said . . ."

He began an elaborate exposition, which only after some time reached the point of his own divorce.

My mind wandered. I saw on a shelf above Galeazzo's head the *Institutes* of Calvin—two copies, one in French and one in Latin.

"Forgive me," I said, "but I am tired, and I cannot understand so many new ideas. Perhaps if I could take Maître Calvin's book to bed with me . . . The French version, please."

Galeazzo's deceitful face was transformed by a look of honest pleasure. "I envy you!" he said, as he gave me the vast volume. "I really envy you the joy of coming to this book for the first time. Not that there aren't new things to be found, every time you come back to it. Thoughts which didn't strike you, perhaps, on previous readings . . . But that first reading! What an experience!"

I found it an experience of unspeakable tedium. Just as I was nodding asleep over the book, Galeazzo appeared at my bedside with a bundle of papers. "You might prefer this version," he said. "It's the newest edition—still in printer's proofs, as you see—with all the arguments against Servetus."

So I skipped the long, long arguments for God's existence, and tried to make out who Servetus had been. Another sorcerer? A spreader of the plague? I could discover only that he had believed something wrong about the Trinity. What he ought to have believed was "clearly"—Calvin's word—explained by St. Augustine.

"The Father, as to himself, is called God; as to the Son he is called Father. He who, as to the Son, is called Father, is not Son; and he who, as to himself, is called Father, and he who, as to himself, is called Son, is the same God."

I had once almost lost my Catholic faith, by reading Cardinal Pole's defence of transubstantiation. Now I feared that, if I read any more such defences, I should not be a Christian at all. I put down the great bundle of proofs, and went to sleep.

9

The next day was Sunday, and, as Galeazzo told me, I was obliged by the Genevan law to go twice to church. "No doubt you would prefer the English Church," he said. "John Knox is preaching there today."

"Surely I shall hear John Knox preach next week, at the wedding?"

"Of course! You would rather go to St. Pierre, and hear Maître Calvin. It is a great experience. He goes on, absolutely without a sign of fatigue, for three or four hours."

"Is there a special church for the Italians?"

"Yes, that's where I am going, but it would hardly interest you. Not that Pastor Ragnone is a bad preacher. But we have to share a church with the Spanish exiles. As both communities have three services every Sunday, each service, I'm afraid, lasts little more than an hour."

"Nevertheless, that is where I should most like to go."

Galeazzo moved like a man sitting too near a fire. "This is a hard thing to explain to a stranger. We Italians – our great vice is lack of discipline. We simply do not know how to stand together. Italy is continually ravaged by foreign armies – always invited there by some Italian, to spite the rest."

"Anyone can see that, but what's the remedy?"

"The remedy will be found. The time will come when Italy is ready to accept the leadership of pious, enlightened people – people who will be able to give our whole nation the discipline it lacks. But to do that, we must first accept this discipline for ourselves. We must not be always quarrelling, spreading slanders —"

He broke off, and seemed to recollect himself. "The fact is, for all sorts of reasons, Signor Vaughan, it would be better if you went to St. Pierre, and heard Maître Calvin preach."

"It would be better if I crossed the frontier into Savoy, and went to Mass."

"Signor Vaughan, please—not while you are staying with me."

"I should be sorry to insult your hospitality," I said. "If you want me to go to a Protestant service, I will, but please let it be an Italian one! You see, *Monsieur le Marquis*"—I saw how he was soothed by the use of this title—"although I have observed in Italy these vices which you speak of, the best of the Italians are . . . as the ancient Romans would say, fit to live in a city. Civilised! They seem not to be living in our own barbarous age. If anyone can convert me to your religion, it will be an Italian."

He softened, as if he took this to be praise of himself. In fact I was thinking of Dr. Bologna. I longed to know what danger was hanging over him. When his wife spoke with such passion about the execution of innocent people, she had, I thought, more in mind than the story she told. They were all very anxious to secure young Rosa's future, before . . . Before what, I might find out, if I went to the Italian Church.

Once Galeazzo had agreed to take me there, he was more than ever conciliatory. He said: "I will send my servant with a note to Timothy, to ask him to dine with us after church."

That this nobleman should invite a carpenter to his table was not, I thought, so much a sign of Genevan democracy as a special effort to please me. I asked who was to cook the dinner, if every soul in Geneva had to go to church. Galeazzo explained that the servants attended afternoon service.

When he ushered me into the church, I saw the Bologna family, and bowed to them. They nodded, but did not smile; it seemed that smiling was not done in that place. All the hundred or so people present had a certain likeness, not in features but in expression, as if they had long ago decided that: "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Before the preacher began the service, Galeazzo took him aside. I saw them both look at me.

The service began with hymns which were more like marching songs, without any musical instrument to keep them in tune. Then came the sermon, a commonplace exhortation to brotherly love. There was nothing in this to fix my mind, and I certainly had nothing to look at. The niches of the church were empty, with rough marks where the statues had been chiselled out of them.

Whatever paintings had been on the walls had long been white-washed over. The stained glass had been replaced by clear glass, which allowed the full heat of the sun to roast the congregation. I remembered how Galeazzo had cozened me in Venice. "There have been excesses. Mistakes have been made." This was no mistake; the Protestants had done it of set purpose. For a moment I hated them all, even the Bologna family. Maliciously, I began to watch Costanza.

She was sitting on the bench in front of me, but a little to one side, so that I could see her profile as she turned her face towards the preacher. It would have been a very beautiful profile, if it had been more at peace. The woman could not rest. Her lips trembled; one long hand continually stroked her headdress; her head turned this way and that as if she were straining to hear the preacher's words—which were both clearly audible, and not worth hearing. I thought: She is waiting for something. Then I looked at her aunt, at her husband, at Rosa, and saw that they were all ill-at-ease—all, to appearance, waiting.

Yet nothing happened. The preacher ended in a swooping, soaring burst of eloquence about the love of God. The people rose, and sang another of their marching songs. Then, led by the preacher, they prayed for their persecuted Brethren in Italy. Soon the service was over.

In the street outside, Galeazzo became absorbed, once more, in a whispered conversation with the preacher. I greeted the Bologna family, who now seemed more at ease.

"How did you like our service?" Dr. Bologna asked me.

I said there was very little in the sermon which I could not have heard from any pious Catholic friar. Costanza smiled.

"You see," she murmured, "that was not the sermon he meant to preach."

We were interrupted by Galeazzo, who greeted the Bolognas with an air of hearty jollity. I could see what an effort it was for them to respond. In a cheerful voice, Galeazzo said: "There is to be a special meeting of *le grabeau* tomorrow evening. You won't fail us, I'm sure."

Dr. Bologna said quietly: "We shall be there." His wife looked away. As they turned to go home I saw that some of their compatriots nodded to them, and some spoke a few words, but quickly,

even furtively. Others drew aside a little more than was quite necessary to make way.

Galeazzo was universally greeted, or rather courted. People came up to consult him about the christening or schooling of their children, about the best way to answer some letter smuggled from Italy . . . It was more than an hour before we could go back to dinner.

On the way I asked: "What is *le grabeau?*"

"Well . . . You know that when you go to confession, you may find yourself talking to some deaf or ignorant priest. And the penance imposed on you is a matter of chance—it may be some public degradation, or only a few repetitions of a prayer. We don't think that's good enough. We confess our sins to one another, just as St. James advises in his Epistle, and then, in as brotherly and loving a way as we can, we point out one another's failings, and suggest suitable penances."

"I would like to see that."

Galeazzo smiled. "I am afraid that this must be reserved to our own Brethren."

Late as we were for dinner, Timothy was later. When he came, he apologised in careful French.

"Instead of going to the English Church," he said, "I went to St. Pierre, to hear Maître Calvin. He preached for three hours."

"Could you understand him?" I asked.

"Oh yes! It's not like the French that most people speak here, but they say it's better—it's the true French of Paris. I could follow almost everything."

It was a great pleasure to see that my son looked more like a nobleman than Galeazzo did. Even his table manners were good; I wondered where he could have learned them. Of course, Margaret had known the ways of a rich man's house . . .

"What was Maître Calvin's text?" Galeazzo asked.

"'And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake.' Maître Calvin was describing the sufferings of the French Brethren. I think everyone who heard him was weeping. I know I was." Timothy turned to me. "Do you know, sir, they train pastors here, and send them by the mountain paths into France—"

Galeazzo gave a sharp little cough, but I assured him that this secret was already known all over Europe.

"Of course, we must not say too much about it," agreed Timothy. "We are so close, here, to the terrible Inquisition of Lyons."

Galeazzo seemed reluctant to talk about the Lyons Inquisition. He asked Timothy how the English Bible was going, and said that he himself was helping to prepare the Italian version of Calvin's *Institutes*. That was how he came to have a set of printers' proofs in French, embodying the great man's afterthoughts. "Maître Calvin never changes his principles," he explained, "but there is, here and there, a difference of emphasis."

After dinner Galeazzo suggested that Timothy and I might like to walk by the Lake. "I would like to swim in it," I said. "Is that permitted on a Sunday?"

"Oh yes! Provided that you do it in a secluded place, with decorum. Some people think we make Sunday a day of mourning, but in fact, so long as we go twice to church, we may do . . . oh, almost anything that we can do for ourselves. We don't, for example, hire a boat, because that would make the boatman work, and spoil his day of rest. But now," he added with a smile, "I have to spoil my own day of rest. I must try to help one of our Brethren who is in some trouble."

Timothy said: "There's warrant for that use of the day, in the words of Christ."

I took two towels from my bedroom, and set out with Timothy, by way of the Porte Rive, to the Lake. It was a beautiful day, with a sweet breeze blowing. Half the citizens of Geneva were parading up and down the lakeside path. For the first time I felt that, under their sober dress, they might be like other people. Not, perhaps, like the Venetian gentlemen, who leave wives and daughters at home and parade with their friends, but like the Londoners who spend Sunday afternoon in the fields with their families, the wives gossiping and the children playing together. These Genevans looked happy in one another's company, and in the beauty of the place.

"It's no wonder that God's word is preached here," Timothy said, "since God makes his handiwork so plain in these mountains."

We walked on until we left the crowd behind. Near the north-eastern frontier of Geneva, the road leaves the lakeside. A little wood fills up the space between. Here, I thought, was a good place for bathing.

Timothy hesitated. He said he could not swim.

"I'll teach you," I said. "It's easy. Only lie limp, and remember that the water is by its nature inclined to hold you up. It's like a woman's body, longing to respond to yours. In both cases, you can defeat your own purpose, by being hasty and rough."

He blushed perfectly crimson.

"Timothy!" I said. "Are you a virgin?"

He said: "The . . . the girl that I courted in England . . . I was with her in the fields, and Satan got the better of me. Afterwards I begged her forgiveness. I swore I would marry her. But she refused to have me. She said I was . . . what you say. Hasty and rough."

"So you may be again," I said. "You must not think a modest girl will lose her modesty, only because you've been married to her in church. You will have to be gentle, taking care not to hurt or frighten her."

"How do you know?" Timothy asked. "Have you ever had a wife?"

"No, but I've heard some sad stories from married women."

He looked at me from under crooked brows—my brows—with such a stern reproof that I could not go on. All the spirit of Geneva was against me.

"Come and learn to swim!" I said.

He was not easy to teach, his body having a stiffness and a pride which would not let it float. I found that I could not swim for very long; it was colder here than in Italy. So I came out and dried myself. Timothy stayed in the water, determined to master it, throwing himself upon it again and again. I did not dress, but sat hidden in the bushes, with only a towel round my loins, in case Timothy should stray out of his depth and want help.

Behind me I heard Costanza's voice. "Surely that's Timothy?"

And then young Rosa's voice: "Oh yes! How strong he is!"

Costanza said: "He will be shamefaced if he sees us watching him. Let's wait here."

I could not see them, but they must be close by, in the wood. I hastily began to dress.

Suddenly Costanza said: "*Cara cara*, are you sure that this is what you want? You are not marrying only because it's what other girls do?"

"You know I love him!" Rosa said.

"Well! I love my Federico. But you see, Rosa, when it comes to bearing a child . . . It was what I most wanted, and yet that pain, hour after hour, that feeling as if my body were breaking apart . . . And the fear of death, and the shame of showing my body to strangers . . . I know the women Federico brought in to help him were the best he could find, but . . . To have them touching me where I am never touched, except with reverence and love . . . And then to watch my baby die, and to be helpless, and to see Federico helpless, who helps everyone . . . Rosa, are you sure that you can bear all this?"

"For Timothy I can."

I was dressed now, all but my hose and shoes, yet I hesitated to break in upon their talk. Besides, I found that I was weeping. I could not think why. It was not new to me that women suffer in childbirth. I thought of Kate Willoughby, dragging herself in the rain from one inn to the next, always finding the door slammed in her face, because of her big belly. I thought of Margaret, whom I had abandoned in that state. Then I thought of my mother.

"It is time you made peace with your mother's ghost." Marco had said that, and I had heard the phrase again from Federico Bologna. Why did I, a grown man, become a sullen child whenever I thought of her? Why did I still, in my mind, reproach her with neglect, and not consider that she had endured the same suffering as Costanza? Not the same—worse. My mother had given birth to eight or nine babies, and watched them die, while she was already weak with consumption. For the first time in my life I was weeping, not for myself, but for her.

A grown man, I thought. A grown man, and the father of a grown man.

Once more I heard Costanza's voice. "You are quite right, *cara cara*. Of course I would endure it all again, to have a living child."

There was a shout from Timothy. "I've done it!" he called. "I swam two strokes!" And he did it again, to show me.

"Bravo!" I shouted. "But come back now; you'll catch cold."

As he waded waist-high, I waded out, and threw him a towel. He held it in front, for decency.

Behind me, I heard laughter, and Rosa's voice. "I wish girls could learn to swim!"

I put on my hose and shoes, and scrambled up the bank to greet the women.

"How long have you been there?" Costanza asked me.

"I hardly know," I said. "I was asleep till just now, when Timothy shouted."

While Timothy dried himself in the bushes, the women told me that they had left Dr. Bologna and the Countess sitting on the bank, nearer the town.

"My husband cannot walk far without stopping to rest," said Costanza. "His bad heart . . . But I will go and tell him you are here. I know he wants to talk to you."

I offered to go with her, but she whispered: "Stay and play gooseberry to those two! I have done it long enough."

She set off swiftly, in her easy-flowing dress. To see a lady walking alone, without fear of insult or harm, reminded me, once more, of London. In some ways this place was better than Italy.

Timothy was still dressing in the bushes. Rosa, sitting beside me, whispered: "You are his father? . . . I can see the likeness now."

I warned her to say nothing to Timothy.

"Oh, I know!" she said. "When Galeazzo brought us that money from you—I did ask Timothy then if he thought you might be. He was angry; he told me never to say such a thing again. He said when he was on the ship, escaping from England, one of the sailors told him he was a lucky fellow, to be born a rich man's bastard. Timothy knocked the sailor down. He's very strong; he could knock anybody down. He said his father was an honest labouring man, and his mother was a good woman."

"So she is!" I said. "She was very much like you, Rosa—the same big eyes, and such goodness looking out of them! My conscience torments me still on her account. I catch myself making ridiculous excuses; that I was away at the time; that I did not

know she was pregnant. As if I had made the least effort to find out!"

"But the carpenter she married," Rosa said. "Did *he* know she was pregnant?"

"Yes, of course. He loved her so much that he married her all the same. He loves her to this day; he looks at her as if she were beautiful still, and young. And he loved her child as his own. Timothy's right; he was brought up by good parents."

Rosa was thoughtful. Presently she said: "I cannot imagine such a thing happening here. This carpenter . . . Are there men in England like that?"

"Not many, in England or anywhere else."

She murmured: "Timothy thinks England is the most wonderful place in the world. He's teaching me the language." To show me, she called out in English: "Are you ready, Timothy?"

He came out of the bushes laughing, and saying: "*Tu m'as vu nager?* Did you see me swim?"

While they talked in mingled French and English, I strolled back along the path, to meet the rest of the Bologna family. Dr. Bologna grasped me warmly by the hand. Evidently they were all grateful to me, but could not bring themselves to say what for.

The Countess was the first to come to the point. "Was it by chance you came to our church?"

I told them it had been at my own insistence, and that Galeazzo had been most reluctant to bring me.

"No wonder!" said Costanza. "You spoiled his plans. We did not know this until just before church this morning, but we were going to be denounced from the pulpit."

"What for?" I asked.

I was growing tired of the way they would look at one another, before telling me anything. Dr. Bologna began: "We have said certain things which we honestly believe to be true —"

"Which we know to be true!" said his wife.

"But some of our Brethren, just as honestly, feel that we should not say them while Geneva has enemies all round."

"As if lies would protect us from our enemies!" Costanza said.

The Doctor quietly went on: "Signor Vaughan, you heard us this morning praying for our Brethren still in Italy. We must think

twice before we say anything which could undermine their faith."

"If their faith is based on lies," Costanza said, "it should be undermined."

The Countess remarked: "I wish I could be sure that what Galeazzo cares for is their faith and not their money."

"Oh yes, there's that!" agreed Costanza with a sigh. "You see, Signor Vaughan, our church depends on . . . certain contributions. And in particular there is one friend of ours, who writes regularly to congratulate us on living in this place. And, every time, she sends money. And we cannot find any safe way of letting her know what it is like here."

"Perhaps one day God will let us see her face to face," Dr. Bologna said.

"I shall have so much to tell her then!" said Costanza. "But what concerns us now is—Galeazzo has called another meeting of *le grabeau*, and we know what that means."

"You will have to tell me what it means," I said.

Again the pause, again the look of mutual consultation. They were not afraid of eavesdroppers, as they were speaking Italian. It was myself they mistrusted.

"*Le grabeau* is the custom here," said the Doctor, "and in many ways a good custom. Why should we not sometimes be made to admit our faults? The trouble arises when we do not see them as faults, though the other Brethren tell us that we should. The fact is, Signor Vaughan, I am afraid that it may come to an open breach with Galeazzo, even before the wedding." He looked at Timothy and Rosa, who were sitting on the bank, a few yards away, absorbed in their own talk. "It will break our hearts if we spoil their happiness, and yet we cannot deny what we believe to be true."

"Perhaps you can do something, Signor Vaughan," said the Countess. "You seem to have some influence with Galeazzo. If you could at least persuade him to put off *le grabeau* for a week . . ."

"I doubt if I can," I said. I sat staring across the Lake, at beautiful, Catholic Savoy. Why should I be entangled in a dispute among heretics, especially when they would not even tell me what sort of dispute it was? What was I doing here? Well, I knew that. I was in Geneva because I had not married Margaret, had

not brought up my own son in my own religion. It was a fitting punishment. But as for taking sides . . .

When I turned to look at them again, I knew that I had taken sides already. I felt myself as much the Doctor's friend as if I had known him two years instead of two days. And his moody, sharp-tongued wife was, though she did not know it, the woman who had just made peace between me and my mother's ghost. Besides, Timothy and Rosa . . . So I said (without much hope) that I would help them if I could.

When I returned to Galeazzo's house, I went up to my room to prepare for supper. I was about to pour water from a jug into a basin, when I saw lying in the basin a woman's hairpin.

I looked round the room. The bed was . . . not dishevelled, but not quite as the servant had made it that morning. A chair had been moved.

I put the hairpin in my pocket, and kept it there until supper was nearly over, and the servants had left Galeazzo and me alone. Then I showed it to him, and told him where I had found it.

He pretended not to know what it was.

"Come, come!" I said. "You have been married long enough; you know what sort of pin a lady uses to fasten her headdress to her hair. A thing easily dropped, if she is dressing in a hurry."

Galeazzo muttered that he must have a word with the servants.

"The servants were at church this afternoon," I reminded him. "This thing was dropped while they were out; it was not there when I went up to fetch the towels after dinner. You were left alone in the house. To do a work worthy of the Lord's day, you said - to help a brother in trouble. Or was it a sister? My bed has been rumpled."

He shouted: "It has not! I pulled it straight myself —"

There he broke off, because I was laughing out loud.

After a moment he had breath enough to say: "Nobody here will take your word against mine. You have no real evidence."

"Not evidence enough to have you beheaded, or Madame Tramery drowned. But it might sow a further doubt in the minds of those pastors who are already doubtful about your divorce. If they suspected your motives —"

"You know what my motives are for wanting a divorce. You yourself gave evidence that I did my best —"

"But Maître Calvin told me that I might be called to give evidence again. Suppose I were to add that, after you played that comedy in the graveyard, you seemed positively happy to be without your wife —"

"Why not, after she insulted me? Isn't it natural that I should . . . look elsewhere?"

"Very natural," I agreed. "It's not my doing—it's your own barbarous law which makes these natural encounters a crime. By the way, what made you choose my room? Of course—it has a stairway to the back door. These Elders who burst into people's houses would have looked into your room first, and while they were there you could have got your mistress out of the way. Well! Let us thank the Lord, who watches over His elect, that they missed you this time. And God knows I don't want to bring you trouble."

"Then what do you want?"

"I want to see what I came to Geneva for—Timothy's wedding. I want it to take place in perfect harmony, with all the guests on friendly terms."

"You've been talking to that Bologna gang. Let me tell you in confidence, they're followers of Servetus —"

"What's that to me? I'm a Catholic. A follower of Servetus—whoever he was—is no more damned than a follower of Calvin. All I care for is to see Timothy well married. If you give me your word that your disagreements and your *grabeaux* are postponed until the day after the wedding, I give you my word that your adultery remains a secret."

Instead of answering he said: "It's late. I have to go to evening church."

"I am coming with you," I said. "I want to hear the postponement of *le grabeau* announced from the pulpit."

The announcement was duly made. I saw Costanza look round at me, but I would not meet her eye.

Next morning, having duly thanked Galeazzo for his hospitality, I moved into the Rose, Geneva's best inn.

Now, I thought, I could entertain the Bologna family. I asked the landlord whether he had a room fit for a private supper of half a dozen people. He showed me one I liked. Then he asked me whether my friends were gentlefolk.

I thought the question insolent. With some sharpness, I said: "Dr. Bologna is half-brother to a Duke; his wife is of noble birth; her aunt is the Countess of Pescarola —"

"Oh, it's *that* family! Then I can serve you a good meal. I had to ask you, Monsieur, because of the laws against luxury. The common sort are forbidden to eat anything dainty."

I thought this incredible. But the landlord assured me that some labouring men had just been sentenced to three days on bread and water, because the Elders found them eating cake.

I said: "I thought this was a democracy of equal citizens."

"Oh yes, it is! The laws are the same for us all. But with people of the better sort, the Elders would never think of enforcing the law. What concerns the Elders, you see, is that, Geneva being a prosperous place, a few of the workmen are getting above themselves. The women have got above themselves already; I expect you've noticed that."

"No."

"Oh, most foreign gentlemen complain. Because, if a gentleman offers a Genevan girl money, she calls one of the Elders and has him arrested. That's if he asks her in the street. You see, Monsieur, it's a matter of knowing how to go about it. Now, if you were to say a word to me, I could always arrange a good, sensible girl, who knows how to keep her mouth shut —"

I said: "I only like women who do it for love."

"Monsieur Vaughan! You won't find any of that here."

It was hard to be idle, in that busy, whirring town. I spent the rest of the morning outside the city walls, exercising my horse. Geneva's territory is too small for a long ride. There are Genevan enclaves in the countryside near by, whole villages and vineyards which pay tribute to the city. But I could not reach them without crossing the frontier, and I feared that, this time, Galeazzo would not help me to come back.

So, after dinner, I left my horse in the inn stable, and went down to the harbour. A fisherman who was about to set sail on the Lake agreed to take me with him. Having nothing else to do, I began to ask him how he controlled his boat. I had, in my earlier travels, delighted in helping the sailors aboard a big ship. But small craft had always been a mystery to me. How could one man alone keep a firm grasp on the tiller, furl and unfurl his two sails, and contrive

to catch the wind so cunningly that the same breeze, blowing in the same direction, could carry him out to his fishing grounds and home again?

The fisherman told me that he did not, as a rule, sail alone. He had a companion . . . But when I asked him where his companion was, he told me briskly that it was possible to manage alone. He could lash the tiller steady, so that the boat would hold its course, while he pulled on the ropes that worked the sails. When we were in calm water, with no other boats near us, he let me try to work the sails myself. This filled the afternoon very pleasantly for me, but prevented the poor man from catching much fish. Still, he seemed content with what I paid him.

After supper I called on the Bolognas, to ask them on what day I might entertain them at the inn. Dr. Bologna had been called out to a patient. The women were sewing Rosa's wedding dress. They asked me with one voice how I had made Galeazzo postpone *le grabeau*. I said it was a secret.

Costanza laughed. "I know—you caught him with Anne Framéry! And that's why you've moved out of his house. It must be that—everyone is saying so."

"But I did not say so," I told her.

"There's no need! Everybody knows. The only person who imagines it's a secret is Galeazzo himself."

Though I admitted nothing, I could not help laughing.

We were all sobered by the arrival of the Doctor, looking more pale and ill than I had seen him. His patient had been one he did not know, a Genevan woman in a difficult childbirth. He had saved her life, but the baby was born dead.

"And it was my fault," he said, "for speaking such bad French. There were five whole minutes wasted, while I tried to make the women round her understand what I wanted them to do."

"Oh! Then it was my fault!" Costanza said. "I should have gone with you."

It appeared that she was in the habit of interpreting whenever her husband had French-speaking patients. "I help to nurse them, too," she told me. "At least I wash them, which, God knows, is what they mostly need. And I would have gone this time, only we were all so busy over Rosa's dress . . . Poor Federico! I thought you knew all the common childbirth words."

"I do," he said wearily, "but they suddenly went out of my head."

The Countess asked: "Surely five minutes did not kill the baby?"

"I think it would have been born dead in any case," the Doctor said. He kissed his wife and added: "You must not reproach yourself."

"Then don't you reproach yourself, *caro caro*. You did your best."

As they tried with gentle words to comfort each other, the Countess murmured: "I suppose they paid you nothing?"

"I did not ask," he said. "They were very poor."

Any doctor's wife, I thought, would have retorted that she herself was poor. Anyone but Costanza. She looked reproachfully at her aunt and kissed her husband, saying that he was tired and should go at once to bed. Having arranged that our supper at the inn should be the following day. I took my leave.

As night was falling, I met Timothy in the street. "The house is finished!" he told me. "I've just put the last nail in the last chair."

"Then come and celebrate at the inn tomorrow," I said.

Before my guests arrived, the landlord, with a much more furtive air than when he had been offering me a whore, led me into his private room. With glances to right and left, he unlocked a chest and showed me his guilty secret—a lute.

"If any of your guests know how to play it," he whispered, "I'll bring it to you with my own hands after supper. It won't be heard among all the noise there is, at that time of the evening. If I see any of the Elders coming, I can whisk it away and no harm done. But please, Monsieur, no dancing! That can be heard."

The supper was plentiful. I thought it lacked refinement; no doubt cooks who have been long forbidden to make luxuries lose their touch. But my guests were delighted. "I had forgotten that there ever were sweets and pastries," said the Countess.

Only Timothy and Rosa seemed not to notice what they were eating. We all drank to their happiness in a wine which (by another breach of Genevan law) had been imported from France. But my best moment came when the landlord brought the lute, and put it into Costanza's hands.

Her eyes filled with tears. "Oh no!" she said. "I cannot play. It is too long ago . . ."

"Wait!" said the landlord. He closed the windows, and went outside to make sure that nothing could be heard.

I was afraid of some rebuke from Timothy. But he seemed not to know that lutes were forbidden in Geneva. I have never heard of English heretics, at their most fierce, losing their love of music.

Costanza plucked the strings, at first very timidly. Then she began to sing a song which I had heard often in Italy. It is supposed to be the complaint of a neglected wife.

"*Vigna ero, vigna son . . .*
A vine I was, and am one still
But lie untended on my hill.
And yet I know no reason why
My own dear lord should let me die."

Dr. Bologna sang the next verse—the husband's answer.

"*Vigna eri, vigna sei . . .*
A vine you were, and still may be
But I shall not be there to see.
You had my tending and my love
Until I found a tell-tale glove."

I took the lover's part:

"*A la vigna che voi dicete . . .*
The vine I saw, the glove I dropped.
But then, I swear to God, I stopped.
I never touched what was not mine
So make your peace and guard your vine!"

"How smoothly you brought that out!" Costanza said. "You must have had a great deal of practice in making excuses to husbands."

"On the contrary!" I said. "I'm so discreet that I'm never even suspected."

The Countess remarked: "A girl of a very good family wrote that song. Her husband thought it odd that he should find the

Marquis of Pescara's glove among her bedclothes. But the matter was cleared up, to the husband's complete satisfaction. I believe the Marquis made him governor of a fortress."

I thought it lucky that Timothy had not understood this. We had all begun by talking French, but had relapsed into Italian. So as not to leave Timothy out, I asked him to give us an English song. He sang: "The Cutty Wren." Costanza asked me what the words meant.

"Almost nothing," I said. "It's only an old rigmarole the common people sing, when they feel discontented with their betters."

"Common people sing like that in England? Then how do they sing at court?"

I sang one of the love songs old King Henry made for Anne Boleyn.

"That's pretty," Costanza said, "but not unusual. You could hear something like it any day in Italy. But that tune of Timothy's —it's haunting, mysterious . . ."

She tried to pick it out on the lute. Timothy, to correct her, sang again:

"Oh, where are you going? said Milder to Malder
Oh, we may not tell you, said Festel to Fose.
We're off to the woods, said John the Red Nose
We're off to the woods, said John the Red Nose."

"Why do you stamp your foot when you sing the last verse?" asked Costanza.

Timothy said: "Because . . . Because people always do."

She laughed at this, and then he laughed. I thought he had never looked more beautiful. Still with her eyes on him, she said suddenly to me: "Have you truly never been married?"

I said: "I've been too much of a wanderer. I was thirteen years with Cardinal Pole in Italy."

"There are," observed the Countess, "young ladies in Italy."

"But I'm an Englishman," I said. "I want a wife I can talk to. What would I do with a well-bred Italian girl, who has never been outside her father's courtyard, who can talk of nothing but embroidery?"

"Oh, it's not like that!" Costanza said. "I know young Italian girls don't mix in company with men. We meet them at weddings and great feasts, very formally, with a governess listening to every word we say. But we can always talk freely to older women, and priests. When I was a little girl I used to sit and listen while my aunt and her friends talked to Father Valdes about his translation of the Gospels. And they talked of this world as well! In Southern Italy all the little states are ruled by women, because the men are so often away, fighting. Giulia Gonzaga still rules Fondi for her nephew, just as my own dear Duchess, my godmother, rules Amalfi. When the men come home there is a great parade of deference to them, but still the men can do nothing in their own territories without consulting the women. It's the women who know how many horses are needed for the harvest, and how many able-bodied men each village can supply, and when the local saints' days are, and how to defend the fishermen from the Turks. And of course it's the women who scheme and plan to raise money for the men's wars. What I learned from these ladies was more than embroidery."

"We used to visit the Island of Ischia," said her aunt, "when Vittoria Colonna ruled it. Her husband, you know, was Marquis of Pescara—the same one who inspired that naughty song. While he was busy with his women and his wars, Vittoria had complete control of the Island, and there never was a more prosperous place."

"I knew Vittoria Colonna," I said. "She used to read her poems aloud to Cardinal Pole."

"Oh, that would be some years later," said the Countess. "It was Cardinal Pole who brought her back into the Church. I am afraid she shunned me after that. I was too well known as a firebrand."

"A firebrand?" I repeated. Could this placid, fat old lady, who seemed concerned only to trace out her family tree, ever have been so described?

Costanza laughed at my surprise. "You should have known Aunt Simonetta," she said," when she was the most famous heretic in the Kingdom of Naples. The Spaniards only sent a troop of horse to arrest Federico and me. There was a whole regiment out after her!"

"You flatter me," said the old lady. But she looked pleased. "It was my late husband who was a thorn in the flesh of the Bishops. After he died I did what I could . . ." She sighed. "In those days we were so sure of the right path!"

Costanza went on playing, and her husband sang in his fine, deep voice. He looked a different man from the exhausted, guilt-ridden doctor of the night before. Seeing the restored peace in his face, I tried to imagine how it would be to have a wife always ready to call me *"Caro caro"*, to tell me that I was not to blame, that she was to blame if anyone, that I must rest . . . But then, Federico Bologna deserved a good wife.

I was aware of the landlord at my elbow. "Forgive me, Monsieur!" he said. "Things are quieter now, downstairs. I'm afraid the lute may be heard."

Costanza gave it up to him. We all fell silent. Soon my guests took their leave with smiles and thanks. But I remembered, even as they smiled, that I had done no more than postpone their *grabeau*. Whatever it was they feared, they had six days before it came.

10

I passed the time until the wedding in a busy idleness. The Cathedral Square was lined with bookstalls, and I thought I might spend some hours there. But I found that they sold only books approved by the V.C.P. Bibles, volumes of sermons, vast theological tomes . . . I felt like a thirsty man surrounded by snow.

Three of the pastors whom I had seen at Calvin's house came to the inn and asked me to stay for another week or so. I might be required to give evidence again. I wanted no more to do with this divorce, but I had promised not to offend Galeazzo. So I said yes; I would stay.

Every morning I spent on horseback, every afternoon on the Lake. At night I would borrow the innkeeper's copy of Calvin's *Institutes*, and read myself to sleep. There never was a book better suited to the purpose.

The evenings were the best times, when I helped with preparations for the wedding. These were hindered at every turn by the Genevan laws. Wedding presents, I learned, were forbidden. My looking-glass was wrapped up in a quilt the women had made, and in this disguise brought safely to the new house. Then, though a wedding might take place only on a Sunday, it was forbidden to hire extra servants on that day. So who was to prepare the wedding feast, while all the family was in church? Timothy's new neighbours, in the little wooden houses by the bridge, came to our aid. They were artisans and independent craftsmen. Before Timothy had learned to speak their language, his art as a carpenter had made him accepted there. Now the artisans' wives offered to go to afternoon service, and spend the morning preparing the feast. The Bologna family had only to bring them the food and wine, the night before. It was to be very simple food; since Galeazzo and John Knox would be among the guests, the laws must be strictly kept.

In planning all this, in urging Dr. Bologna to let me undertake

the errands and the expense, in seconding his wife's pleas that he should rest, I found that we were using *tu*, as familiar friends do in Italy, and calling each other by our Christian names. The Countess was always more formal. But Costanza, when she found that the English custom was to call me "Tom", and Timothy "Tim" insisted on using these names. They made her laugh. "It's as if I were to call my husband 'Fed'."

She was grateful whenever I took her place, as gooseberry to Timothy and Rosa. I suggested that, as the wedding was now so near, we might sometimes trust them alone together.

"Oh, I trust them," Costanza said. "But the Republic of Geneva does not."

And one afternoon, on the Lake, the fisherman told me what had become of his partner.

"The silly fool's landed himself in prison," he said. "He let the Elders catch him with a girl, in the bushes by the Rhône. Could have been worse! It wasn't adultery—only fornication, because neither of them was married. In fact, the girl was his promised wife. The wedding was only a month off. He could have waited! We all know the Elders keep a special watch on betrothed couples. Now they're both inside for six months. But I'm not complaining, Monsieur! Don't you tell anyone I was complaining."

On the day of the wedding I dressed myself carefully in my new Genevan clothes, and went to call for Timothy. He seemed calm, but his voice had become very deep. We went to the English Church, and sat in the front row, waiting. Timothy's companions from the printing shop sat in the row behind us, and behind them almost a hundred other English exiles.

Galeazzo came first of the Italians. He greeted us with his most fatherly, benign expression. I tried not to look at the ravaged altar, the bleak windows . . .

Without music, without ceremony, Rosa came down the aisle in her new dress, and sat down at the opposite side from us. She wore no headdress; her brown hair, newly washed, hung loose about her shoulders. Her collar was as white as the whitewashed wall. In all that bare place, the brightest colour was in her lips and cheeks. The Bologna family, as they took their places beside her, looked at her as if she made up for the loss of all the saints.

The Protestant service followed its usual course—fierce march-

ing songs, and long prayers for the persecuted Brethren. John Knox got into the pulpit. At first I was lulled by the beautiful purring voice. Then I began to think his use of simile odd: he said the truth of God was "an odour and smell, that cannot be suppressed". I did not mind his denouncing Queen Mary's rule in England; what he said of the burnings was only a little exaggerated. But he went on to argue that it was unnatural—"a monstriferous thing"—for a woman to rule any country. God, he said, had made women by nature not only weak, but foolish and giddy; power turned their heads. He quoted some Early Father of the Church, who had called women "the port and gate of the Devil". Then he took from Genesis the words: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." Rolling the words round his mouth, with slow Scottish emphasis, he dwelt on the "dolour, anguish and pain" of a woman in childbirth. This, he said, was the living proof of God's malediction on women. The thought seemed to cause him great enjoyment. Then he said it should be a lesson to the bride before him today, to render absolute, unquestioning obedience to her husband.

Thank God! I thought. The Italians do not know what he is saying.

John Knox took a deep breath, and began the same sermon all over again, in French. It was not good French, but it was very slow and very easy to understand. I watched Federico Bologna, whose mother had ruled Amalfi, whose sister-in-law ruled it still. I watched the Countess, whose friends had ruled much of Southern Italy, and Costanza, who had ruled at least her own estate. They were all studying John Knox with curiosity, as if wondering what strange beasts might live in our islands. I burned with shame for my own country. True, Knox was a Scot, but this was the English Church.

The part about the pains of childbirth sounded even slower, more full of enjoyment, in French. I saw Costanza's nostrils quiver. Rosa kept her eyes on the ground. What surprised me most was that Galeazzo seemed to be suffering acutely.

Calvinist preachers mean to make their hearers reflect on their sins. Knox did indeed have this effect on me. What I reflected was that, if I had made Miliella pregnant, there would be men like John Knox ready to gloat over her distress. Because of this I would

have to marry her. I could endure that, surely. If Michael could live with a woman of the people, so could I. True, Michael's taste in conversation was far simpler than my own. But if I could not talk to Miliella, I might in time be able to talk to the child. Unless it proved as bone-headed as herself . . .

I felt miserably sure that there would be a child. God had already shown great ingenuity in punishing my sins. He had brought me to this desecrated place, and was making me listen to this uncouth ranter, who, it seemed, was never going to stop.

He did stop. We all rose. The bride and bridegroom came forward, and John Knox joined their hands. Very few words were spoken. There was no ring. They did not even kiss. And yet it seemed the wedding was all over, and they were man and wife.

Afterwards, in the street, people showed a little more natural feeling. Women kissed the bride; men shook the bridegroom by the hand. But it was not until we reached the little cluster of houses by the Arve, and saw the feast laid out on trestle tables, that I felt this was a real wedding.

Timothy's new neighbours pointed out to me with pride how they had cooked the food in accordance with law. The wine was the wine of the country—coarse red stuff, which I had avoided so far because it went to my head. The people seemed proud of it, and glad that they were a special people, subject to special rules. There were murmurs of delight at the correctness of Rosa's wedding dress.

So it was, in its own way, a happy feast. I saw Costanza carrying food and wine to the grim-faced frontier guards. It seemed even they could smile.

I did not have to spoil my food by talking to John Knox. He was among his courtiers—Timothy's comrades from the printing shop. I was in a place of honour, beside Rosa. I made her laugh by telling her our English marriage customs—the struggling among the girls to catch the bride's posy of flowers, the struggling among all the guests to catch her garters. I did not say that a rout of drunken guests would burst into the bridal chamber after midnight, to ask the bridegroom what success he had achieved. Nor did I speak of Viterbo, where, in the morning, they hang a blood-stained sheet out of the window, to prove that the bride was a

virgin. I said only that the Genevans had some reason to abolish the old riotous ways.

I was, as I sat there in the dappled shade, very much inclined to see what was good in Geneva. Certainly I wanted no quarrel with anyone. Then Galeazzo rose to make a speech, in French.

The bride, he said, was known to him as a virtuous young woman. He wasted no more words on her. It was the bridegroom whose heroic example must surely, he said, inspire us. He was one of those English people—people of all ranks, tailors, carpenters, pastors—who had shown themselves prepared to go steadfastly to the stake. Some three hundred had been burned, and yet, far from being deterred, new martyrs were coming forward every day. "Nothing can break their faith; nothing can break their perfect unity. They live like brothers together; here, in Geneva, we have seen them work and pray as one."

I could see that none of the Englishmen present, except Timothy and myself, were following Galeazzo's French. Indeed, he was not looking at the English, but at the Bologna family. He went on: "What an example they are, these Englishmen, to other nations! What an example—and I say this with shame—to some of us Italians! Oh, my dear brothers and sisters —"

I took out of my purse Madame Framéry's hairpin, and began to play with it.

"To some even among us here present it must be said that, instead of maintaining brotherly unity —"

Since everyone else at the table held a proper Genevan stillness, my fidgeting attracted Galeazzo's notice. He glared at me, stopped in mid-sentence, and then went on to an elegant, but cloudy, appeal for unity. I felt it as my victory when he sat down without having directly insulted Federico Bologna.

Timothy then rose. His French was improving day by day. He thanked Galeazzo for his kind words, but said that he must refuse to be described as a hero, since of himself he could do nothing; all that he had done was by the special grace of God. He would, however, like to thank one man who had acted as God's instrument. Then he made a sign to one of his friends from the printing shop. This man produced, from under the table, a box. Turning to me, Timothy said: "We have no luxuries here, no giving of costly presents. But I may return to you what is your own—the

suit of clothes you lent me for my escape. Please accept them, with the everlasting gratitude of myself and my bride."

I was very much moved. At first I could not speak, but people urged me to rise and reply. And then, looking round at these passionate, serious faces, I knew there were things I wanted to say.

So I rose and spoke in French, which I translated, sentence by sentence, into English and Italian. (I confess I enjoyed the gasps of admiration.) I made light of my own part in Timothy's escape. It could not have been achieved (I truthfully said) without the connivance of the guards, the servants and the boatmen, who had pretended not to see through Timothy's disguise. And for this the English Protestants must thank their own dauntless courage, which had brought them the admiration of the people.

"You have the right," I said, "to glory in your courage. But do not make it the occasion of spiritual pride! Do not imagine that, because you are brave, all your opinions must be right! And when you think of this courage, which we call manly, remember that many women have gone to the stake with as much constancy as men."

Then, since Genevans love to hear the Bible quoted, I said that the price of a virtuous woman was far above rubies. Timothy's mother, Margaret Thaxted, I went on, was an example of a virtuous woman; her marriage the model of a Christian marriage. "Timothy's father, Joseph Thaxted," I said firmly, "does not domineer over his wife; he consults her and considers her in everything, so that they make all their decisions as one."

By this time I was enjoying the look on John Knox's face. "How often," I went on, "women are wiser than we are, and can give better counsel! How often on my travels I have come to some well-ordered province, where the people were prosperous, the roads clear of robbers, and found that it was a woman who governed there, acting as a faithful regent for her husband or her son! With what absolute obedience men serve these women, not from fear alone, but from admiration! Women rulers are more thrifty than men, not so easily swayed by passion or pride, ready to make war with courage when they must, but never seeking it out for their own vainglory. From the talk I have had with Princess Elizabeth, I believe she will prove to be such a ruler in England."

There was a burst of mutinous applause, from some of the

courtiers around John Knox. I knew even while I was boasting that I had spoken to Elizabeth only of trivial matters; what I knew of her intentions I knew at second hand. The truth is, I was drunk. What intoxicated me still further was to see Costanza smiling at me.

"In our own lives," I said, "how often we hear of bad men redeemed by good women! And a good man is made even better by a good wife. When we see a woman undaunted by exile and poverty, a woman who can laugh at the loss of her estate, a woman whom the years cannot rob of her beauty, since it shines out of her soul—then it is as if we saw the angels walking here on earth. This young bride has grown up, as Timothy has, with an example of Christian marriage before her eyes. I know that she will prove, not a Turkish slave, not a footstool to her husband, but his helpmeet and his partner. I trust he will never forget that she has a soul, as precious before God as his own soul. Then he will have reason to be proud on the day when Margaret and Joseph Thaxted welcome their beautiful daughter-in-law to England."

When I sat down, Rosa kissed me. I took more wine, to moisten my throat. This was a mistake. When the guests had risen (as they soon did; it was nearly time for afternoon church) I found myself standing a little unsteadily. One of Knox's courtiers, also swaying, asked me where I had learned French. I said: "From a nun, on the pillow." The courtiers laughed.

Before I knew it, John Knox was in front of me. "I hear," he said, with a chuckle, "you're not married."

I heard myself replying with drunken solemnity: "I am waiting for a good woman to redeem me."

There was mocking laughter from the courtiers. "By the look of you," said Knox, "you've waited a good long time."

"Far too long!" I agreed. I still did not want to quarrel with anyone.

"And we'll just see," he continued, "how you'll go on when you get a wife."

A thin, battered little woman, who had been standing behind him, murmured that it was time to go. He turned on her, snarling. Till now he had spoken fairly civilised English, but to his wife he spoke in his native dialect. "Haud your whisht, wumman!" The fear in her face made me angry.

"Very few men," I said, "have treated their wives worse than the late King Henry. Yet he thought so highly of women as rulers that, when he was abroad, he did not fear to entrust his kingdom to his wife. It was Katherine of Aragon, ruling as Regent, who brought about the English victory at Flodden."

Only wine and anger could have made me name Flodden to a Scot. I thought he would fly at my throat. But my fellow-Englishmen came between us. They were now laughing at him, not at me, and this maddened him.

"I'll tell you how the English won Flodden!" he shouted. "How they win all their victories—by treachery! It was Englishmen who betrayed me at Frankfurt. My fellow-exiles, pretended Protestants, denounced me to the magistrates as a man preaching sedition. Which I am! Ay, and I'm not ashamed of that! Why should we wait like sumphs for a new Queen! We should be taking our fate in our own hands! I'm glad the English drove me out of Frankfurt, because it's only here that I can see what all the world should be—a true, godly republic!"

His own followers had for some minutes been trying to hush him. He had said far too much in front of me, a Papist. They led him away, reminding him that he had to preach again that afternoon.

I looked round. Timothy and Rosa had not even seen the dispute. They were too busy saying goodbye to the other wedding guests. Galeazzo was already hurrying to the town, I supposed to keep his Sunday afternoon tryst with Madame Framéry. The Bologna family had watched the dispute, without, of course, understanding a word. I translated it for them.

"So *that* was what happened at Frankfurt!" remarked the Countess.

The people who were going to afternoon church had left us. Costanza and the Countess rolled up their sleeves, and began to clear the tables, putting what food was untouched into Timothy's house, and the scraps into a bucket for the neighbours' pigs. I asked if I might help. They told me that on Timothy's stove I should find two great tubs of water, which had been heating for hours. I staggered out with one of them, but Timothy took it from me, and lightly placed it on a table. Then he brought out the other tub as if it weighed no more than a jug of ale.

"It's how you hold it," he said.

"But this is wrong!" said Costanza. "The bride and bridegroom must not work."

She snatched away the apron which Rosa was putting on, and firmly tied it round her own waist. "You have a lifetime of work before you," she told the girl. "What you have to do now is go to your looking-glass, and see that when Tom called women angels he was, of course, blaspheming—but only a little!"

Rosa gently, shyly, went into the house. It was not long before Timothy followed her, and closed the door. I was sorry that the wedding feast had not lasted longer, and that there had been no singing and dancing, but I liked the thought of a bridal night in the afternoon. Federico and I sat peacefully under the tree, watching the women work. A sweet breeze blew on my brow, and made me sober. Since we were speaking Italian we could now speak freely.

"Your speech was very pretty," said the Countess, "but surely not original? It owed something to Castiglione's *Courtier*."

"I would gladly have acknowledged that," I said, "but I believe the book is forbidden here."

The Countess asked: "What book is not?"

Costanza said: "Timothy looked so happy when you praised his mother! You are a splendid liar, Tom. I suppose you have had great practice."

"Too much. But I was not lying when I praised Margaret. The man who married her and made her happy showed more sense than I did."

"But do you admire her as much as you said?" asked Costanza. "Truly? . . . So many of you libertines despise the women who fall in love with them."

I said: "I shall never think the worse of a woman for knowing a good thing when she sees one."

They laughed, but Federico said seriously to his wife: "You must not call Tom a libertine. He has done things he repents, as we all have, but he is an honourable man."

"Oh, Tom knows I don't mean it," she said. "We shall miss you when you go, Tom. There is nobody to make us laugh here. But I suppose you have nothing to keep you now."

I told them of the pastor's visit. "I may have to stay a few days more. Besides, I'm expecting a letter from Marco Rafael."

Then I wished I had not spoiled the afternoon, by thinking of that letter.

"We are half-way through the dishes," Costanza told her aunt. "We can use the clean water in the other tub."

"This could all have been left to those women who live out here," grumbled the Countess.

"What—when they did all the work this morning?"

"They're accustomed to it."

"So are we by now," said Costanza. "That's one thing Geneva's taught us—not to be ashamed of work. We shall have more of it, now that we've lost Rosa."

"Can't you find another maid?" I asked.

"Any maid who comes to us now will be a spy. I'd rather do the work myself. Do you remember, Federico, when you told me to embrace poverty? Very well! I embrace it! Any silly girl who goes into a convent can do as much."

"Not in the good convents," the Countess objected. "Nuns of good family have lay sisters to wait on them."

Federico said: "Spy or not, we must have a maid. We are not so poor that you need work like this."

"Oh, we shall find some way," said Costanza, kissing him. Then, while I pretended not to look, she bit his ear and whispered: "It's well worth embracing poverty, if it means embracing you!"

When the dishes were dried and stacked, she turned to me.

"Now, Tom, can you forget your noble ancestors, and bend your back to a burden? We have to return the benches and the tables."

"Where to?" I asked.

"Take everything to the guards on the bridge."

Federico rose to help me, but she pushed him down again, murmuring: "Mind your silly heart!"

I carried trestles, boards, and huge linen tablecloths to the grim-faced guards. To my surprise, they took them to the middle of the bridge, and the guards on the Savoy side came to receive them. Somebody whistled, and the servants came out of the inn. Within ten minutes everything had vanished.

"Now I must pay them," said Costanza. She put money into

the hand of each Genevan frontier guard, and ran lightly across into the hostile, the dangerous land of Savoy. Here too she paid the guards. Then she went into the inn.

"Will you let her back?" I asked the Genevan guards anxiously.

"Of course! We know Madame. So long as there's no Elders looking . . ."

Costanza now appeared at the door of the inn, shaking hands with the landlady. She came back as lightly and as quickly as she went.

"How many laws did *that* break?" I asked her.

"As many as need be! The people out here could not live at all, unless they made friends with the other side. Didn't you see, when I took wine to the guards, they shared it with their friends across the bridge? Look how cheap and simple it was, to hire everything from that inn, instead of bringing it all the way out from the town."

"But don't the Savoy people mind?"

"It's awkward for them, because they don't recognise Geneva. They treat with it only through Berne. That's why they haven't a proper frontier post here—officers to examine passports, and so forth. They were going to close this frontier altogether, and let nobody through either way, but their Bishops insisted that they must let in the Catholics fleeing from Geneva. So, whenever you pass one of their guards, you say: 'Catholic exile!' and press a coin into his hand. Or you simply give him the coin."

I said we still had all the well-washed plates with us, on the wrong side of the frontier.

"Those belong to the people who live here. However poor they are, they keep their shining rows of pewter plates. It's the only sort of decoration allowed."

She made me carry the stacks of plates to the guards, who promised to watch them until the owners came back from church.

"And now we must go," said Costanza. "Those two will be shamefaced, when they come out of their house."

As we walked back to the town, through the ripening fields, she said: "Come to supper tomorrow, Tom."

Federico said: "You're forgetting, *carissima*. Tomorrow is *le grabeau*."

"Oh! I had forgotten. Today, I felt as if we weren't in Geneva."

She sighed. "Well, on Tuesday, then, Tom. We shall all be a little . . . ruffled. We'll need you to smooth us down." She tried to laugh, then added: "That is—if you're still here."

"I hope I shall be."

"You hope! To stay on in Geneva? What for?"

I was myself amazed that I did not want to leave. It could not be the delights of a Genevan Sunday. To keep the law, I went that evening to another service at the Italian Church, and hated the bareness of the place once more, and once more found the sermon tedious. The preacher reminded the people that *le grabeau* would take place the following evening.

After the service I saw the Bologna family standing alone, the other Italians keeping a safe distance, as from lepers. I was going up to the Bolognas when Galeazzo stopped me. He shook me warmly by the hand. "Congratulations on your speech!" he said. He kept his back to the Bolognas. Costanza gave me a mocking little smile, as they turned to go. Galeazzo had such a grip on me that I could not escape, by any means short of hitting him. With his arm locked in mine, he saw me back to the inn. Was he mad, or drunk? He seemed sober, and yet he was telling me that he would never forget my many services. "And no more will Maître Calvin! I shall make sure of that. When you came here, Signor Vaughan, it was a great day for Geneva!"

11

Galeazzo appeared at the inn again, the next day, just before dinner. I had to invite him to dine.

"You may leave Geneva whenever you like, Signor Vaughan. Your part in the divorce is over. My wife has been summoned to appear in Geneva. If she does not do so within two months, I shall be free to marry again."

I would not congratulate him, so I said nothing. He went on: "Maître Calvin was delighted to hear of your speech."

"Why?"

"The truth is, this Mr. Knox . . . There has been trouble with his neighbours, over his habit of beating his wife, which may be the custom in your country, but . . ."

Was one devout Calvinist denouncing another, to a known Catholic?

"And surely," he went on, "Mr. Knox would not in any country be considered a very well-bred man?"

"A barbarian."

"As I thought! He came bursting in on Maître Calvin this morning, with some story that you had insulted him about a battle. It was fortunate that I was present, and could give Maître Calvin the substance both of Knox's sermon and your speech. You see, Signor Vaughan, this bee in Knox's bonnet, about woman rulers – this is entirely his own. The Scripture tells us that the Prophetess Deborah judged all Israel, and Maître Calvin believes that your next Queen may prove herself a Deborah. In any case, it would not please her to hear such a sermon as was given yesterday."

I said I could not imagine Elizabeth taking to Mr. Knox.

"Exactly! And when she is your Queen, as I am sure she will be soon, Maître Calvin will know how to value her friendship. What could be better for both of us than an alliance between England and Geneva?"

"Is that what Maître Calvin wants?"

"Indeed he does! He has a great admiration for the English. While Venice is declining, London is growing, increasing its trade with every nation. I believe the English have entertained merchants from Muscovy?"

"Yes; they came to London while I was there."

"Muscovy! Would the Venetians ever think of that? What brave, adventurous people the English are! Once they have a Queen worthy of them . . . Maître Calvin was most interested when I told him—what I myself did not know until your speech yesterday—that you were a personal friend of Princess Elizabeth."

So that was it. I was about to tell Galeazzo that he had misunderstood my drunken speech. What silenced me was a sudden sense of danger. I had been a courtier, and in this republic I felt myself at the court of a perilous King. So I simply smiled, like a man with many secrets.

"We shall always be happy to hear from you," he went on, "when you return to your country, which I trust may be soon. I suppose you will be leaving Geneva this afternoon?"

I told him I was going to spend the afternoon on the Lake, as usual. I had become determined to learn how to sail a small boat as well as the fisherman did it.

"You have taken to Genevan ways, and find honest work a pleasure!" said Galeazzo gaily. "Then your departure will be this evening?"

He was not, I thought, equal to such a difficult task as overwhelming me with flattery, and at the same time begging me to go. To cut the conversation short, I told him that I would leave after supper. Indeed, why not? I could make no sense of my own desire to stay.

And yet I did not pack, or give notice to the landlord. If Galeazzo wanted me to go, there must be some good reason why I should not. I was undecided, still, at supper. Just as I was rising from the table, the landlord gave me a letter, sent on from Galeazzo's house. The writing on the outside was Marco's. I did not want to open it where anyone could see me. I took it to my room.

The letter began with good news. One voyage I had put money in had proved more prosperous than expected, and there were five

hundred gold ducats waiting for me at the Banca Giro. Marco enclosed a list of the Banca's agents in the great cities of Europe. I had only to write the Banca Giro a letter, telling them which one of these I wanted to pay me the money.

Marco added that he himself was well "and unmolested". Then: "The other misfortune you feared has not taken place. A woman who could not read has been following your advice, and learning from a schoolmaster. Now he is going to marry her. I hope, my dear friend, that you will be glad of her happiness."

I was glad of my own. True, I did think that a woman who had lost me ought to mourn for more than six weeks. But what I felt was pure joy. Light-headed with relief, I said out loud what I had not known I thought: "Now I can have Costanza!"

I believe—I hope—that the horror which then transfixed me was not a horror of punishment. To know that the penalty for her was drowning, for me the axe, might have given a sharper edge to the pleasure. It was not fear that made the sweat start out at every pore, but shame. I had seduced married women, but never the wife of a friend.

At my left shoulder a mocking devil whispered that I had not wanted to. Marco's fat little wife, Michael's timorous Graziella —I could see why their husbands liked them, but they were no temptation to me. Whereas Costanza . . . What was it that made me burn for Costanza? Other women have soft bosoms and slender waists. Other women roll up their sleeves, to show rounded arms. And her face . . . When I thought of her face, it came before me hard with scorn, as I had seen it when she thought me a lover of boys. How else would she look at me, if I should ask her to betray her husband? We old bachelors may boast, but there are women who cannot be seduced. I had fallen in love as boys do, without possibility, without hope.

No sooner had I told myself this than I began to wonder if her devotion to her husband was all it seemed. Those caresses that she gave him when I was present—might they not be a signal that she felt some temptation, and was (as it were) touching a lucky charm against it? Her husband, after all, was old.

He was only twelve years older than myself, and he had lately given her a child.

She had teased me, and called me a libertine, and asked, with

a long, considering look, whether I despised the women who loved me.

So did the old Countess tease me. Noblewomen think themselves above the affected modesty of tradesmen's wives.

It might be possible to avoid the Elders. Women are free to walk alone in Geneva, and Costanza was on good terms with the frontier guards. I might lure her across the bridge, into the inn.

And then face Federico, who had called me an honourable man?

I need do nothing yet. For the time being I could hide my feelings, and keep her, at least, as a friend.

"Love's like a cold; it canna be hid." Perhaps other people had already seen (although I had not thought of it till now) that my drunken speech at the wedding was an avowal of love.

I must leave the city at once.

The next morning. I could say farewell to her tonight.

I could not; the Bologna family were attending their mysterious *grabeau*.

There was an hour of daylight left; I could spend it in saying farewell to Timothy and his wife.

In the soft evening light the mountains glowed, and I remembered that, when I had first looked at this place, I had thought it the abode of innocence. I knew better now; yet I still thought with tenderness of the cluster of wooden houses by the bridge.

As I came to Timothy's house I heard passionate, angry voices. The door was open. Timothy and his wife were shouting both at once, and in different languages. I heard from Rosa. "*Je te dis que j'irai!*" And from Timothy "I tell you you won't!" She came running out of the door full tilt; I caught her in my arms. Timothy seized her, dragged her away from me, and slapped her face so hard that she fell to the floor. I ran to help her up, and then turned on Timothy, who stood glowering at us both. I began: "You—"

Rosa put her hand over my mouth. She was right. I had been about to call him a bastard.

He shouted at her: "Now you see what you've done! Brought a Papist into this!"

She retorted: "The whole world will be brought in—" and could not say more, for sobbing.

I made her sit beside me, on the bench by the stove. "What is it, my dear?" I asked her. "What has he done to make you run away?"

"I'm not running away," sobbed Rosa. "Only I must see the Doctor. He has been arrested."

"Dr. Bologna? What for?"

"Heresy."

"There!" Timothy burst out. "You see how he grimaces, at the thought of Calvin arresting someone for heresy. Let me tell you I'm heart and soul with Calvin. There must be some sort of discipline in this place, or how can Geneva hold together against its enemies?"

"Fiddlesticks!" I said. Reverting to French, I asked Rosa to tell me more.

"Signora Bologna came to me in tears this afternoon," she said. "It's not only that the Doctor is in prison, it's that none of the Italians will help him."

"Not even his patients?"

"Oh, they might send him kind words—even money. Anything that they can do in secret. But the trouble is, the Doctor speaks French badly. Calvin will cross-examine him in French, about points which in any case are too difficult for the angels, and how can the Doctor answer, without an interpreter? Some of the Italians here speak French well, but not one of them will stand up in court and interpret for him. Signora Bologna would, but I speak French better than she does; I went to school here. So I told Signora Bologna, if they would let me come into the court, I would interpret."

"Nonsense!" Timothy broke in. "They'll never let a woman meddle."

"But I could go and ask!" Rosa said. "At least I could see him." She turned to Timothy. "Why won't you let me see him? I love him; he's been a father to me – the only father I've known. And it's not as if I'd neglected you! I waited here while I was dying to go, so that I could cook your supper—yes, and I've washed the dishes. Why can't I go now?"

"Because you're my wife!" Timothy said. "I can't have you running about the town, saying the things you do say about

Calvin. They can't be true, or why didn't you say them before we were married?"

"I couldn't!" Rosa sobbed. "It was all a secret among us Italians; we never said it in French."

"Then you were deceiving me. Or else you're trying to deceive me now!"

Rosa cried out: "What I've told you today is true. You must believe me!"

"How can I? It's only a year ago I was ready to go to the stake, declaring that Calvin's religion was the best and purest in the world!"

I said: "You should thank God you have lived to be wiser."

"It's not wisdom!" Timothy protested. "It's only a confusion and a . . . a sophistication, with people like Servetus bringing in their quibbles. They should hold to the plain word of God."

"If the word of God is so plain," I said, "why do your translators fantasticate every page of it with notes?"

He was close to tears now. He shouted: "It's easy for you! You don't believe in anything."

"What I believe," I said, "is that we should stop quarrelling over the nature of God, and learn to know human goodness when we see it. It's not for Geneva to condemn Federico Bologna; it's for the whole world to condemn Geneva, if it won't let a good man live in peace."

"I wish you would tell Calvin that!" said Rosa.

"I shall if I get the chance. Rosa, don't go to the prison now. I'll go. I'll make sure the Doctor has everything he needs. And you stay with your husband; let him tell you he is sorry."

"How can I do that?" said Timothy. "She's a Delilah, trying to destroy my faith!"

"You will find," I said, "that you are better off without it."

I was about to leave them, but when I saw Timothy still blackly glowering, I cried out: "Don't make the mistake I made! Don't think yourself too good for a woman, when the truth is that she's too good for you!"

Then I left, for fear of saying more. Indeed, I had said far too much already. I had committed myself to stay in Geneva, to meddle in matters which were none of my business, and to put myself, perhaps, in real danger. Yet I hurried back to

the city with a light heart. I had an honest reason for seeing Costanza.

I asked my way to the prison, and then found that it was a building I had passed many times. It takes up one corner of the Cathedral Square, and can hardly be missed, but it does not look like a prison. They still call it by its old name—*l'Evéché*, or the Bishop's palace. The dungeons in which the Prince-Bishop used to keep heretics are now the main part of the prison, but some small rooms on the ground floor have been bolted and barred to serve the same purpose. After giving all the necessary bribes I was conducted along a stinking passage to one of these rooms. Costanza sat there, side by side with her husband. There was nowhere to sit, except the bed; they moved up to make room for me.

Both were calm. "We have expected this a long time," Federico said.

I told him I was willing to interpret at his trial. He begged me not to take such a risk. Costanza said. "Not one person who knows this place—who knows the danger—is willing to do it."

"You are wrong," I said. "Rosa is willing, and I am not going to be more timid than a young girl. But I make one condition. You must tell me what it is they have against you."

Federico hesitated, and then said: "There is a great long indictment. Reading forbidden books, once calling Calvin 'Monsieur' instead of 'Maître', giving a wedding party for more than twenty guests—"

"There were forty-two," put in Costanza. "We thought of every other law, but we forgot that one."

I said, losing patience: "You know very well that none of this is to the purpose."

"Forgive us!" Costanza said. "We have so long kept this rule, that whatever happens we must not tell a stranger! Now God is punishing us for keeping silent, in the face of such monstrous crimes."

"What crimes?"

Federico sighed. "You asked us the other day about the Spaniard Miguel Serveto, or Servetus. Did you really not know . . .?"

"Galeazzo said he was a wandering adventurer."

"He was a doctor," said Federico "and a good one. He studied in Paris; he made friends with Calvin there. He dissected bodies

with the great Vesalius, whom I knew in Padua. Servetus was one of the first to understand the circulation of the blood. Unfortunately his head was full of other things. He was in trouble with the Paris Inquisition, once, for maintaining that he could foretell the future from the stars. And his writings on the doctrine of the Trinity caused such a scandal, among both Protestants and Catholics, that he was forced to go into hiding. Under the name of Villeneuve, he became physician to Pierre Palmier, Archbishop of Vienne and Primate of all France. He treated the townspeople, too. In the twelve years he lived in Vienne, he made himself so much beloved that, when he was at last denounced as a heretic, nobody would believe the charge. The Inquisition of Lyons arrested him, but there was not one witness who would say that Villeneuve was the same person as Servetus. The press on which his most recent heretical work had been printed was taken to pieces and spirited away; every printer in the place denied having set up the type. Above all, the Archbishop came forward to defend his doctor. These great men of the Church often hate the Inquisition; it usurps their powers. Besides, I believe the Archbishop loved Servetus, and was glad to get him released.

"After his release the Inquisition received fresh evidence. A series of heretical letters, all signed by Servetus, proved to be in the handwriting of Villeneuve. Yet, for fear of the townspeople, the Inquisition dared not arrest him openly. He was told that some prisoners in the dungeons underneath the Archbishop's palace were in need of a doctor. Servetus went to see them, and the door was locked behind him. I am afraid the Archbishop connived at this. But he must also have connived at the escape of Servetus, a few days later. You know from your own experience, Tom, that such an escape cannot happen without the aid of a great many people.

"The Inquisition had to be content with burning Servetus' effigy, and his books. He himself was nearly four months in hiding; where, I do not know. I suppose the Archbishop arranged something. Servetus might have lived in safety to this day. One thing alone tormented him. He knew the identity of his accuser, and he could not rest until all Europe knew it. The person who had first denounced him to the Inquisition, the person who had

then denounced him again, sending fresh and conclusive evidence, was Calvin."

My head reeled. "Calvin denounced a man to the Catholics? Calvin, who makes his congregation weep on Sundays, by describing the cruelties of the Inquisition at Lyons?"

"You look at me as if I were mad," said Federico. "God knows I have deserved that."

"We both deserve it," said Costanza. Her eyes never left her husband's face.

"It is five years ago," said Federico, "almost to the day, that Servetus came riding into Geneva. He was not badly dressed, or short of money. He put up at your inn, Tom—the Rose. It was a Sunday. His first action was to go the Cathedral, where his old friend Calvin was preaching, and sit facing him.

"Most people can be daunted by a sudden reminder of their sins. We all saw yesterday, Tom, how you made Galeazzo falter, by playing with a woman's hairpin. But Galeazzo is an underling. Calvin is a great man. When he saw the man he had betrayed, come back as it were from the dead, he did not even blench. He simply gave the word for his old friend's arrest."

"On what charge?" I asked.

"That was a difficulty. Servetus had not broken any Genevan law. Besides, this place was not then a paradise for informers. There was a law in those days that any citizen who accused another of a serious crime must himself go to prison, until the accusation was shown to be well-founded. So Calvin, when he had drawn up a learned document, accusing Servetus of twenty-three separate heresies, did not himself present it to the Small Council. He persuaded his cook—"

"Bribed his cook," said Costanza.

"—induced his cook to act as the accuser, and go to prison until the case was heard. Some of the Councillors did not want even to hear it. In those days there was a strong party against Calvin. Servetus pleaded that he was a foreigner, that, whatever his beliefs, he had never preached or printed them in Geneva. At first he was so sure of himself that he did not ask for a lawyer. He spoke French well, and his cool, clear-headed defence of himself had almost defeated the Inquisition. Why, then, should he fear the Geneva councillors? Indeed, they were inclined to let

him go. When the cook appeared in person to accuse him, and became entangled in the twenty-three heresies, some councillors laughed. The only point they could grasp was that Servetus had at some time attacked Calvin.

"Servetus denied this. He said that, having known Calvin in Paris, he had engaged in a long, friendly correspondence with him, on theological points. Suddenly Calvin, instead of answering his arguments, wrote him a letter full of scurrilous abuse. 'His next action,' said Servetus, 'was to denounce me to the Inquisition.'

"The Councillors—even those who least liked Calvin—utterly refused to believe this. But Servetus insisted that, at his second arrest, the Inquisitor, Grand Master Ory, had shown him the letters which proved both his identity and his heresy. They were, without exception, letters he had sent to Calvin. He knew Calvin had received them, because he had replied. Nobody but Calvin, therefore, could have given them up. Moreover the Inquisitor had told him, laughing in his face, that the first accusation too had come from Calvin.

"Servetus was quite calm as he said all this. His one aim, in coming to Geneva, had been to make this truth known. Now he was content that the councillors should expel him from the city.

"But of course, once they had heard him say such things of Calvin, they could not let him go. They kept him in prison while they debated what to do. And now Calvin himself at last came forward in person. He was not concerned, he told the Council, to defend his own reputation. The story was too fantastic to be believed. 'How could I, all of a sudden, be so familiar with the satellites of the Pope? On such good terms? It's incredible that letters should pass back and forth between people as different from each other as Christ and Belial.' His only aim, Calvin said, was to bring this deluded man to a better mind. He begged leave of the Council to attend the trial of Servetus henceforward. He also asked that (as the accusations appeared to have some substance) his cook should be released from prison.

"The Council granted both petitions. From then onwards Calvin acted openly as the accuser of Servetus. Less openly, he brought such pressure on the governor of this prison that Servetus was kept fettered hand and foot. A jailer was supposed to bring

him a bucket from time to time, but sometimes the jailer stayed away, and Servetus was forced to dirty the floor of the dungeon. Then the jailer would refuse to clean it. 'I am choking in my own excrement!' Servetus told the Council, when he next came before them. The councillors gave orders that he should be kept clean; it was not pleasant for them to try a prisoner who stank. But, throughout the two months of the trial, obstruction and intrigue frustrated every effort to take Servetus out of his fetters, or get him clean clothes.

"And yet great efforts were made. You must not think, Tom, that everyone liked to see one Protestant accusing another of heresy—a word which does not occur in the Bible. There were angry voices raised both here and in the other Protestant cities.

"Servetus himself could not believe that the Council would condemn him. When an envoy came from the Lyons Inquisition, to demand the return of this escaped prisoner, Servetus fell on his knees before the Council, asking only to be judged by his fellow-Protestants. The Council did indeed refuse to hand him over. Calvin made a great display of supporting them in this. He was not the man, he said, to give anyone up to the Inquisition. Some of the councillors asked the envoy, in secret, who had denounced Servetus. But they received only the customary answer—that the Inquisition never names its informants.

"Servetus might well have been acquitted, if he had kept calm, and insisted on his legal rights. But he lost his head. I told you that Calvin has no use for purposeless cruelty. He used just enough to turn this man of forty-two into the wild hothead he had been as a student. Calvin remembered how he had bubbled in those days with all sorts of wild notions. Calvin also knew how these notions would appear to the Genevan councillors.

"Servetus had a particular objection to the orthodox view of the Trinity. 'Instead of God,' he told Calvin, 'you show people a three-headed Cerberus.' Calvin said to the councillors: 'You see! He compares Christ and the Holy Ghost to Cerberus, the dog who guarded the gates of Hades.' Another thing Servetus tried to explain was his mystical belief that God is everywhere. 'We move and are in God, in whom we live.' Calvin, with one eye on the councillors, asked him: 'Is this floor part of the substance of God?' 'Yes, everything is.' 'So, when I stamp on this floor, I am

stamping on God?' And still Servetus tried to explain. 'You yourself are part of the substance of God.' 'And the Devil?' asked Calvin. 'Yes, yes, the Devil too is part of the substance of God!'

"Servetus went on to attack Calvin, for his doctrine that young children can be damned. Calvin believes that even a new-born baby shares in the common guilt of mankind. Servetus denied this, and added that the merciful God he believed in would not reckon as mortal any sin committed before the age of twenty.

"At this a real shudder went through the councillors. They thought it a direct incitement to young Genevans to become even more unruly than they already are.

"When Servetus at last understood how badly things were going for him, he asked for a lawyer. This was refused, not by Calvin but by one of his underlings, who said: 'You can tell your own lies well enough!'

"At the next session of the trial Servetus began to protest, in a calm, dignified way, at this injustice. But then Calvin accused him of loose living, and thereby drove him to confess his most closely guarded secret – that he was impotent. After that, Servetus raved and heaped abuse on Calvin. He demanded that the Council should not only find him innocent, but Calvin guilty. Calvin's property should be seized and given to Servetus, to repay him for all he had suffered.

"Calvin grew angry too, but he knew what he was doing. He was bullying his opponents into voting for the condemnation of Servetus."

"Once they did that," Costanza said, "they sealed their own fate."

"None of us knew that at the time," said Federico. "What we could see – all of us who abhorred this trial – was that Servetus was doomed, if he did not bridle his tongue. But nobody could find an opportunity to warn him. At last he fell ill. It was no part of Calvin's plans that he should die a natural death. A doctor was called – myself. I was allowed to bring Costanza with me, to act as my interpreter. We made a great to-do, telling the prison governor that no doctor could treat a fettered man on a plank bed. So at last we had him freed from his fetters, and carried into a better room – *this* room. Costanza washed his poor starved body, and I dressed the sores the fetters had made, and we laid him on

clean sheets, in this bed. He was quiet enough then; he thanked us with all the sweetness of manner which had made him beloved in France. He told us the thing most on his mind—that his creditors in Vienne would not be paid. The Inquisition had asked him who they were, and he had refused to give the names, because he knew that anyone he named might be seized and tortured. Yet he felt it as a stain on his honour, that he still owed money.

"Costanza spoke to him in Spanish; she had learned it as a child. In all the languages we knew, we begged him to be more moderate when he came before the Council. He said: 'I try to keep my temper—I do try! But when I see Calvin looking so righteous, when I know that he denounced me to the Inquisition—'

"Tom, this is what haunts me—what haunts us both. We begged him to forget this fantastic story. We knew—we thought we knew—all that could be said against Calvin. He was a zealot, and a cruel one, but he was honest.

"Servetus told us: 'You do not know him at all. Because he cares nothing for money or women, you think he is above human weakness. He has one weakness which makes up for all the rest—his vanity. In a letter I wrote him I showed that I knew more Hebrew than he did, and for that reason he is ready to pursue me to the ends of the earth, to use any means, however vile—' And then he broke off, saying with tears: 'No, it is useless. I can see that you will never believe me.'

"Not even the burning of Servetus, when he screamed in agony for half an hour, is such a terrible memory as that moment. He had turned in his distress to us, his only friends, and he could not make us believe that he was telling the truth."

"Wait!" I said. "The story *is* incredible. What makes you think now that it was true?"

"In the autumn of last year," said Federico, "I was called to the house of Guillaume Trie, a rich merchant, an exile from Lyons. A servant of his was dying. Since the household spoke only French, Costanza came with me. We could do nothing for the dying man, except listen to the words that he was gasping out. Deathbed repentances are not much esteemed in Geneva; it is thought that God will judge you for your life, not for your last moments. And yet old Catholic habits reassert themselves. The

sternest Protestant cannot bear to die without confessing to someone. This man, almost beyond speech, insisted on telling us that he had carried Calvin's denunciation of Servetus to the Inquisition. His master, Guillaume Trie, had a cousin in Lyons, Antoine Arneys, who was a firm Catholic. But Trie had the Council's permission to correspond with his cousin 'in order to win him to the Gospel'. The letters were always opened by the town censor. The servant said, however, that his master had twice employed him to carry letters which were not to be shown to the censor, but smuggled down the Rhône to Lyons. When he demurred at thus breaking Geneva's laws, his master assured him that this was at the special request of Maître Calvin. The second letter he carried was a great bulky packet. Antoine Arneys opened it in the servant's presence, and a great sheaf of manuscripts fell out. Arneys cried out in delight: 'This will surely satisfy the Inquisition!'

"On hearing this story, we immediately asked Guillaume Trie to join us. And there, in the presence of his dying servant, he admitted to us that every word was true. 'Why not?' he said. 'I did what Maître Calvin wanted, and what Maître Calvin wants is right.'

"We went together to Calvin's house, and asked to see him. A servant told us to state our business, and we sent in a note. 'To tell you what we have just heard from the dying servant of Guillaume Trie, and from Guillaume Trie himself.' Calvin sent his man back to tell us that he had no time to waste on trifles.

"We went home and talked it over with the Countess, and with Rosa. She is a girl with an excellent understanding; she knows what is happening in Geneva, sometimes better than we do. She reminded us that all the councillors opposed to Calvin had by now fled from Geneva, or been executed for sedition. The burning of Servetus had been only the beginning of Calvin's victory. Since then, step by step, he had made his power absolute.

"At least we could tell Pastor Ragnone. The following day we took him to see Guillaume Trie. We were not allowed past the threshold. 'What do you want here?' said Guillaume Trie. 'Your patient is dead.' Then he stood on his doorstep, stoutly denying everything. I said: 'At least you will admit that you have a cousin called Antoine Arneys, who lives in Lyons?' He slammed the door in our faces.

"Who else would believe us? Our only witness was dead. We asked for permission to travel to Basle, and this was granted—I think in the hope that we would not come back."

"Why Basle?" I asked.

"To see Sebastiano Castellio, the man who tried to prevent the witch trials. After that, but years before the Servetus trial, Calvin forced him to leave Geneva."

"Calvin's reason," said Costanza, "was that Castellio had falsely accused him of an urge to dominate."

Federico said: "If I had known with what unrelenting spite Calvin pursued Castellio, I would have been much more inclined to believe Servetus. Basle is an independent city, but there is a strong Calvinist faction on the Town Council there. Calvin instructed these followers of his to blacken Castellio's character so that he would never be allowed to teach again. For years this learned man shovelled earth as a builder's labourer. And yet he could not be silenced. There were protests from the Protestant cities when Servetus was burned, and Calvin wrote a pamphlet justifying his action. Castellio wrote one in reply. 'When I reflect on what a heretic really is, I can find no other criterion than that we are all heretics in the eyes of those who do not share our views.'"

"What else can any Protestant say?" I asked. "Once you've repudiated the Church—"

"Don't you understand anything yet?" asked Costanza bitterly. "In his own eyes Calvin *is* the Church. He's the new Pope; Geneva's the new Rome. He made one of his underlings write a pamphlet demanding that Castellio should be burned."

"Castellio is, however, still alive," said Federico cheerfully. "He wrote a second pamphlet, a most useful one, pointing out that by its own laws Geneva had no right to burn heretics. That was quite true. There was such a law, in the Prince-Bishop's time, but when he ran away the law was abolished, and the Council forgot to re-enact it before trying Servetus. So there still is no such law. I shall point that out to them, at my own trial."

"Calvin surely must have an answer to that," I said. "What did he say when Castellio mentioned it?"

"He said Castellio had stolen firewood from the City of Basle."

My head was reeling again. "I am sorry, Tom," said Costanza.

"But from this point onwards the story is all like that. We went to Basle and met Castellio, and he said the Calvinists there were accusing him of polygamy. Because they'd found out that the printing of his pamphlets had been paid for by the Marquis of Oria. You know him, Tom – the man with the two Berber slave girls. I told you he had a generous heart. Through his kindness, Castellio found some teaching work, and no longer has to labour with a shovel. And there was another Italian in Basle – Giacopo Aconcio, who designs fortifications. He wrote a book in favour of complete religious freedom, and he called it *The Stratagems of Satan*, because he thinks that intolerance is the Devil's way of dividing Christians from one another. Because of the title of the book – which is all they've read – Calvin's boys call him a Satanist. Well! We told our story to Castellio and Oria and Aconcio, and they weren't even surprised. They said they'd always believed that Servetus was telling the truth. But since none of them could prove it – and we still could not – it might not be wise to put it in a pamphlet. And yet Federico and I could not bear to keep silent."

"It was not that we wanted to injure Geneva," Federico explained. "On the contrary. You see, on that great day in 1536, when the people knew that their Prince-Bishop had gone, and they came together in the Cathedral Square, to swear that they would live henceforth by the Gospel, they were founding a democracy, the first in Europe since ancient Athens. That was the first hope of something better than the old hereditary kings, who have brought the world into chaos with their tyrannies and their wars."

I said I could not see that Calvin was better than a king.

"Nobody had heard of Calvin then; he was only a visiting preacher from France. For years Geneva was a democracy – an ignorant, blundering, cruel one, but a democracy still. It would be so again, if the citizens could cast off this rule of one man. Our friends in Basle pointed out to me that I was not a Genevan citizen. But no more is Calvin. Neither he nor I can sit on the Small Council, or the Council of Two Hundred, or vote when they are elected. His authority is all of the spirit. If he were not revered, he would be nothing. Still, our friends thought we had no chance against him here. They advised us to stay in Basle. We very nearly did."

"Only they talk German there," Costanza said. "Rosa began to prattle it fast enough, but Federico could hardly say: '*Guten Tag*' after three weeks."

"Besides," Federico went on, "the Town Council there dug up a dead Anabaptist, David Joris. They had found out that he was the man who, at the time of Servetus' trial, wrote letters of protest to all the Swiss cities. The letters had very little effect, since the poor man wrote them in his native tongue—Dutch. Still, his action displeased the Calvinists on the Council, and they saw to it that his rotting body was burned in the main square. The Marquis of Oria took that as a signal to leave. So did Acoccio; he went to Poland."

"Only Castellio stayed in Basle," Costanza said. "He has friends here, in Geneva, who send him all the news, but he did not want to tell us their names. In case we should be tortured, you understand. He said we should find some independent way of sending and receiving messages. I told him about the inn just over the border, and how I slip over there for a few minutes, if I want some little thing I can't buy here. Castellio said it wasn't a good place; he would never dare to go into Catholic Savoy, any more than into Geneva. But it was all we could think of. So we said farewell to Castellio, and came back here."

"Didn't you know the danger of that?" I asked.

"Yes," Federico said. "But we had decided what we ought to do."

"We were very slow in doing it," Costanza said. "And very cowardly. Because by then I knew that I was going to have a child. It was such a wonder to us, after fifteen years, that we could think of nothing else. Oh yes! And then there was a snowstorm, and our shutters were blown down, and young Timothy came offering to mend them. When we knew that he wanted to marry Rosa, we were so happy! That's our great comfort now—that we've seen Rosa safe."

I could not bear to tell them what I thought of Rosa's safety, at the hands of my bigoted, violent son. I said: "I suppose you did speak out, or you wouldn't be in this trouble."

"It was when I came near my time," Costanza said, "that I began to be afraid of dying in childbirth. And, as Federico says,

old Catholic habits . . . I wanted to clear my conscience. I was haunted by Servetus, by that starved, sleepless face . . . I told Federico that we must speak, and he said that the only thing holding him back had been fear of upsetting my pregnancy. Then we talked to my aunt, and to Rosa, and they agreed that we must act according to our consciences."

"But where could you speak?" I asked.

"The instrument was ready to our hand," said Federico. "*Le grabeau.* We are invited to confess our sins there. So, last May, Costanza and I told our assembled Italian Brethren of our remorse for refusing to believe Servetus. We told them what we had heard in the house of Guillaume Trie. None of them doubted that we were telling the truth."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Why—because they knew us!" Costanza said, looking at me in surprise.

"All the controversy at that meeting," Federico said, "was on what we should do next. Some of the Brethren thought that we should simply talk to all the Genevan citizens we knew. This is a small town; once a thing is known to a few people, it is known to everyone. But others felt that we should not do anything behind Calvin's back. If we wanted this place to be a true democracy, they contended, we ought not to use the methods of court intrigue. So it was agreed that we should send our pastor to Calvin, with a request that he should meet us and hear what had been said against him. Until we had heard his answer, we would say nothing to any Genevan.

"So, the next day, Pastor Ragnone went to Calvin. He came back a changed man. He was trembling from head to foot. He told us that Calvin had better things to do than listen to 'Papist fairy tales'. Then he reminded us that Geneva had laws against slander; they would certainly be used on anyone who spread the story. The matter was at an end.

"It was not, of course. That second meeting went on for hours, and adjourned without reaching any conclusion. But we agreed that we would not spread the story, until our own *grabeau* decided that we should."

"That was our great mistake," said Costanza.

"It was not a dishonourable mistake," Federico explained.

"We Italians here have always lived as a community; we do things by agreement or not at all."

"But it gave Calvin time," Costanza put in, "to write to Galeazzo, who was in Venice. You remember, Tom—that was when you met him. Calvin told Galeazzo to come back in a hurry. Until he did come back, nothing was done to us."

"Except the visits from the Elders," Federico said.

"Oh yes. We grew quite used to them. They kept knocking at our door in the middle of the night. But we all sleep in the right beds in our house; what could they do? They took our favourite books away; that was a pity. The last time they came, I was crying out in childbed. One of them *would* poke his nose round the door, all the same. He saw Federico holding up the new-born baby, all covered in blood, and he fainted. The other Elders had to carry him out. They never came after that."

"Pastor Ragnone called every day," said Federico.

"At least he kept reasonable hours," Costanza said. "The poor man was terrified that we might call him as a witness. He had heard nothing, he reminded us, but Guillaume Trie's denial. We would always agree to that—and the very next day, he would come and say it again."

Then they told me of Galeazzo's return.

"He came to our house first," Costanza said. "Not a word of any disagreement—only talk of Rosa's wedding, and what you had said about the dowry not being important, and your being a witness in his divorce."

"It was just as he was going," Federico said, "that he told us there was to be a special meeting of *le grabeau*."

Costanza said: "I was weak, still, from childbirth, but I would not stay away. The meeting went on so long that my poor little Tonio, my baby, began to cry. I had to open my dress and suckle him. I would not leave, once I heard what Galeazzo was saying."

"He began by accusing himself," said Federico. "He said he had shown unforgivable, criminal lack of vigilance, in not detecting the plot which evilly-disposed persons had long been hatching, a plot which had as its aim nothing less than the restoration of Papistry in Geneva. Did anyone present imagine, he asked, that the agents of the Pope would appear openly as

Papists? They would adopt disguises, as polygamists, as Anabaptists, as advocates of 'so-called toleration', as Satanists, even as petty thieves – for what else could one call a man who had been seen stealing firewood from the City of Basle? And Basle – yes, Basle, an outwardly Protestant city – would be the ideal centre for these Papists. 'There they can plot against us all, against Geneva, against' – he dropped his voice – 'Maître Jean Calvin.' The purpose of all this was to convince the Brethren that they had been guilty of deplorable weakness, in not at once recognising and exposing our story as a rigmarole we had learned by heart in Basle. When I was at last permitted to speak, I tried to remember what I had myself told Servetus. I must not lose my temper."

"You kept it wonderfully," said Costanza. "Much better than I did."

"I did succeed in leaving out the polygamy and the stolen firewood," Federico said. "I simply repeated our story, and then I said that, far from learning it in Basle, we had told it before we went there, to Pastor Ragnone. At this the pastor jumped up and said: 'No, no! You promised not to call me as a witness!' I told him we did not want him to say that our story was true – only that we had told it to him, and that he had gone with us to Guillaume Trie's house, and that all this had been before we went to Basle. He said: 'No – I don't remember. I don't know. It may have been after.' Galeazzo cried out to the Brethren: 'You see how they try to entangle the Pastor in their lies!'"

"It went on like that," said Costanza. "Meeting after meeting, with wilder and wilder accusations against us. In the middle of it all our baby died. We had to go straight from the funeral, to yet another *grabeau*. I only sat there; I don't remember what anyone said."

"I remember one thing," said Federico. "Galeazzo told me there was no evidence that my parents had ever been married."

"And the morning after that meeting," said Costanza, "in fact, the morning after every meeting, Galeazzo came to see us, full of good fellowship, begging us to believe that he had spoken sternly for our own good. Maître Calvin bore us no ill will, he said; he quite understood how good, simple, trusting people like ourselves had been taken in by 'that Basle gang'. If only we would sign a retraction of our story, we should find Maître Calvin quite ready

to forgive and forget. We dared not slam the door in Galeazzo's face, for fear he would stop Rosa's wedding."

Federico said: "He made the other Brethren feel his power. Those who spoke up for us, if they were tradesmen, found that their best customers mysteriously left them. If they were pensioners, they no longer received their share of the money sent from Italy. And even those who could not be so directly touched grew sick to death of the incessant meetings. Attendance at *le grabeau* of one's own church is compulsory. Some of them begged us to sign the formal recantation. 'We'll still know that what you said was true, but we can all have a rest.' I found myself with fewer and fewer patients."

Costanza turned to me. "That was how the matter stood, when you arrived here, heralded as Galeazzo's friend. Federico said you could not be a bad man, if you had been living with Marco Rafael. But perhaps you can understand why I was rude and suspicious, and made wild accusations against you, and suddenly burst into tears."

I said: "I am surprised only at your calm."

"Oh, our souls have not been shaken," said Federico cheerfully. "Because, the more the storm raged round us, the better we understood what good reason we had to be sure of ourselves. If Calvin had to make these extraordinary efforts to deal with us through *le grabeau*, it meant that he was afraid to bring us to open trial."

"We knew that, if we did not give way, Calvin would have to act openly against us," Costanza said. "But we did not know when. The first warning we had was from the Marquis of Oria. You remember, Tom, when you met him at the inn? The next day, the Saturday, I asked you whether he had said anything about us. I knew that he must have come to give us a warning. His bold, open manner of sending for Galeazzo was only so that it should not be said he had come furtively. He must have known that Calvin would not let him enter Geneva. He could not have been safe in Savoy either; it was brave of him to come, and kind. Well, early on the Sunday morning, before church, I slipped across to the inn, and, sure enough, there was a letter Oria had left for me. I destroyed it, but not before I had learned it by heart. It said: 'You dear, dangerous people, what have you done

to poor Calvin? He cannot bear it any longer; he has ordered Pastor Ragnone to denounce you from the pulpit on Sunday morning. Do not wait. Leave the city at once.' And he enclosed money for our journey."

I asked: "What did you do with the money?"

"I still have it hidden. We could not use it then. If we had run away, Rosa would never have seen Timothy again."

I thought that might have been for the best. But what I asked was how Oria had known Calvin's intentions.

"I suppose from Castellio. He knows everything that goes on here. What nobody could know was that you would insist on coming to our church. Galeazzo warned the pastor just before the service. He knew that Calvin would not want a stranger to find out what had been said against him. We have had these eight days together, thanks to you."

"And even now," said Federico, smiling, "I am, as you see, in this clean room, with a bell to summon the jailer when I want anything, and a proper bed, and no fetters. The treatment of Servetus caused such a scandal throughout Europe that it will not, I think be repeated."

"Or perhaps," his wife said, "Calvin knows that you will not lose your temper, whatever is done to you."

I heard a disturbance outside. Through a tumult of men's voices a high, haughty tone came clearly. "You cannot keep me out. I am Simonetta di Salerno, Countess of Pescarola."

I rang for the jailer, and gave him the necessary bribe. The Countess came into the cell and remarked that it was quite unfit for the brother of a duke.

"What happened at *le grabeau*?" Costanza asked her.

"Oh, Galeazzo announced Federico's arrest, and said that everyone present would be expected to denounce his heresies. I said they could hardly do that if they did not know what the heresies were. Galeazzo said that this was just the kind of cavilling and quibbling which had brought our Italian Church to its present state of disrepute in Geneva. Why could we not take an example from the English Brethren? I told him how the English Brethren at Frankfurt had denounced John Knox to the magistrates. I went on to say that somebody might soon denounce Galeazzo, for his adultery with Anne Framéry."

"Aunt Simonetta!" protested Costanza. "We agreed we were not going to mention that. It's the sort of thing *they* say."

"Well, I am sorry, my dear, but I lost my temper a little. Especially when I saw that not one other person present would open his mouth. What a wretched company of cowards!"

"They are all very tired," Federico murmured.

I said: "But how can they be cowards? Surely these are Protestants – the people who defy the Inquisition, who spend years in dungeons, who go calmly to the stake . . ."

"I am sure they have all been brave in their time," Federico said. "But when we were facing the Church of Rome we knew – or thought we knew – exactly what was right and what was wrong."

"It is all so different," said Costanza, "when your own comrades turn against you."

The Countess cried out: "I could forgive their cowardice, if one of them – just one – would interpret for you! I am afraid that Calvin is reckoning on your bad French."

"I am sure he is," Costanza said. "But he will be disappointed. Tom is going to interpret."

The Countess turned to me in amazement. "What are you dreaming of? You are a foreigner. Galeazzo needed you for his divorce, but that's all settled now. Take sides with us, and Calvin will have you escorted, under armed guard, to the frontier. Why should he tolerate your presence for a moment?"

I said: "As it happens, there is one reason why he should. Calvin wants to cultivate the friendship of Princess Elizabeth, and Galeazzo has got it into his head that I am a close friend of hers. And some blessed, blessed instinct kept me from telling him that I hardly know her."

"Surely he will find that out?"

"He may not. These great men, with all their spies, are often hard put to it to discover what is happening in other countries. Once Thomas Cromwell had to advise King Henry what his policy should be towards the German princes. His only information was a letter saying: 'Germany is troubulous, and full of roar.' So it may be some weeks before Calvin finds out that I am a person of no importance."

"Even if he finds it out tonight," said Federico, "even if he

expels you and we never see you again, we shall always be grateful to you, my dear, dear friend."

We embraced, and he asked me to see the women safely home. It would not be much out of my way, he said—only a few steps round the corner.

In the street Costanza said: "Oh, Tom, I could not believe my eyes when I saw you in the prison! Because last night, when we came out of church, and not one soul would speak to us, I saw you coming then, and I thought—one friend! And then Galeazzo seized you, and headed you off, and I thought—no, not one! But you are a friend, Tom; I thank God for sending you."

I loved her for this, more than ever, but now it seemed a chaste love. It was (I thought later, alone in my room at the Rose) as if my love for her had been absorbed in my great love and admiration for them both. And then I thought of something very strange. When I had heard Margaret and Joseph Thaxted urging Timothy to die rather than recant, I had been horrified. Next, I had pitied all three, as poor zealots who knew no better. And even when I came to admire the Protestants' courage, I felt impelled to tell them that courage cannot prove the rightness of one faith against another.

Yet now I felt that something would be proved, by Federico going to the stake rather than retracting his word. If such a martyrdom did not shake the power of Calvin, it would shake, in some sense, all other powers of evil. I loved Federico; I wanted him to live; but I would never urge him to recant. As I fell asleep I was considering what other ways there might be to save his life.

12

In the grey morning it seemed to me that Federico's case was hopeless. It was not the trial I feared, but some quiet murder in prison. Calvin, surely, would never allow such things to be said against him in open court.

Then I remembered that Calvin thought he was dealing with a stuttering foreigner, who could be bullied into forgetting every French word. Calvin must know that none of the Italians would interpret, and could not yet know that I would. Federico's one hope was to keep that a secret until the moment I entered the court.

I hurried to the prison to tell him so. The jailers had grown surlier overnight. "His wife's already run in to see him, run out again—thinks we've nothing to do but lock and unlock for her." I had to give them a bigger bribe than before. But at last I got in.

Federico told me calmly that he and his wife had been thinking on the same lines as myself. "She is bringing all my food from home," he said. "Not that I am afraid of poison—yet. It would be Calvin's easiest way out, and undetectable, because everybody knows that I have a weak heart and may die at any time. But Calvin likes to humiliate his enemies, to triumph over them in public, and so long as he hopes to do that he will keep me alive. Of course, he will do his best to make the trial uneven. He will twist the law, try to prevent me from calling my wife as a witness—"

I said: "We must have a lawyer to defend you."

"Oh my wife is already out looking for one. She means to call on every lawyer in Geneva. The exercise will be good for her health, poor girl, and perhaps keep her from fretting. But I know that I shall have to be my own lawyer. I bought myself Geneva's laws—some great thick volumes—a few weeks ago. They are in French, but I can make them out, with the words there in

front of me. It's only when I try to speak I become confused. Could you please go to my house, Tom, and bring me those books?"

At the house I found the Countess busy sweeping and sanding the floors. She was not, I thought, doing it very well.

"Would you like me to hire a servant for you?" I asked.

"I could hire one for myself," said the Countess. "We are not penniless yet. But my niece is right; anything is better than having a spy in the house."

When I asked for the books, she put them into my arms, remarking sadly: "So Federico still believes in law! It's a marvel a man so honest has been permitted to live till now."

I carried the vast volumes round the corner to the prison, and only when I got there did I think what a transformation Geneva had made in me. I had done this work myself, instead of hiring a porter.

"What a pleasure it is," Federico said, "to be in a quiet place, with plenty to read! Now I can make notes for my defence. When I have done that I should be glad to talk to you again, Tom. Could you come this evening?"

"This afternoon, if you like."

"Oh, I think I shall be busy until after supper."

"*A rivederci!*" I said.

Smiling, he reminded me that I might at any time be expelled from the city. "So it had better be: *Addio*!"

I reminded him of the stone warriors, who say farewell to each other outside St. Mark's.

"Perhaps you are right," Federico said. "Perhaps they are about to fight a Tartar horde. But it may be that they are facing some crusaders, who mean to rape and murder, and still feel sure of their own Christian righteousness."

Just after I left the prison I came face to face with Galeazzo. He looked at me as if I were a ghost. "*Bonjour, Monsieur le Marquis!*" I said. "Did you think I had left the city? . . . How could I, when I heard that such an interesting trial was in prospect? My dear friend, Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth, is concerned above all things to see justice properly done. She particularly asked me to observe, on my travels, whether judges were incorruptible, whether accused men were permitted to speak

in their own defence, whether the laws, as written, were carried out in practice . . ."

"This is hardly the sort of trial to interest Her Highness," Galeazzo said. "It is all a most unfortunate misunderstanding, and . . . and the fact is, it concerns only ourselves."

"So the prisoner told me!"

"You have seen him!" Galeazzo could hardly turn pale, but his red face was now somewhat mottled.

"Oh yes!" I said. "That's permitted, surely? All countries allow it, at least until the prisoner is tried. Yes, I visited him last night, and again this morning, but neither he nor his wife would tell me what he had done. They said, as you do, that it was a matter between Calvinists. However, I suppose the trial will be public."

"Of course, of course. That is . . . the Council will allow in anyone who has business there."

"As I have, being an observer on behalf of our next Queen."

"If . . . if you really want a seat in court," said Galeazzo, "I will see what can be done. But the fact is . . . we are all hoping that there will be no need for a trial."

"Oh? Has Maître Calvin adopted the habits of Cardinal d'Aragona? Does he have people strangled quietly in their cells?"

"Certainly not! What I mean is . . . This has all arisen because our poor, good, simple Doctor has allowed himself to be used by some very unpleasant people. And now he's too obstinate to admit his mistake." Dropping his voice, Galeazzo added: "It's his wife, you know. A headstrong, arrogant woman. She's made herself unpopular, by insisting on her noble birth, which of course counts for nothing here. I'm afraid she's led the poor old fellow by the nose. The only hope was to separate them for a while. That may make him see reason. In fact I'm on my way to him now, to plead with him as a friend."

I might not be able to save poor Federico's life, but at least I could save him from this visit.

"Monsieur le Marquis! If you want to see the Doctor without his wife, this is not the time. She will be bringing him his dinner. He has conceived some distaste for the prison food. Come with me" – I seized him firmly by the arm, and swung him round – "to

dine at the Rose. I should like so much to hear more about your system of justice."

"It is the most perfect in the world!" said Galeazzo eagerly. He continued on this theme throughout our dinner together. As I watched him I understood that this man, though perfectly unscrupulous in telling lies, was also perfectly honest in his admiration for Calvin. "He has a degree in law," Galeazzo told me reverently. "When he came here he found some ancient forms of self-government, which had lost their power under the tyranny of the Prince-Bishop. The Small Council existed then, but it was almost overwhelmed with various duties. Maître Calvin persuaded the Council to leave petty crime to the magistrates. The Council gets on with the business of ruling Geneva, except when it has to try the serious cases—cases of treason and heresy."

"You put heresy on a level with treason?"

"Our state is founded on the plain word of God. Anybody who disputes that word, or tries to undermine it, is a danger to the state."

"But the members of the Small Council, surely, are shopkeepers and merchants. Can they understand religious disputes?"

"They always ask Maître Calvin for his advice, which he very generously gives, however busy he may be."

"But Maître Calvin is not himself a judge?"

"Oh no! His only official position is as Chairman of the V.C.P. —the Venerable Company of Pastors. His leadership is purely spiritual."

"Didn't the V.C.P. judge your own divorce?"

"They examined the witnesses and made a summary of the evidence, which they then presented to the Small Council. It is always the Small Council which makes the legal decision."

Trying to understand all this, I kept him with me far into the afternoon. Whenever he showed an inclination to go, I would begin: "As the Princess herself said to me . . ." That held him. I had heard so much of Elizabeth, from people who really knew her well, that I could always make my lies convincing. It was nearly five when Galeazzo rose with a start.

"How late it is! And I have an appointment with Maître Calvin."

"My respectful greetings to Maître Calvin," I said. "And if he

could use his spiritual influence to have me admitted to this trial . . ."

"Of course you may come to the trial. It will be public. All our trials are."

Then why, I wondered, had he not said so at first?

It was now not much more than an hour to supper-time. But I, to keep this man with me, had eaten and drunk so much that I could not face more. There was only one thing I wanted to do before seeing Federico again. I set off through the cornfields to Timothy's house.

All the old jokes about the dangers of interfering between married people seemed stale and useless. I could think only of the danger to a defenceless girl.

There was not much noise from any of the little wooden houses. Through open doors I caught glimpses of families already having supper. Here, as in other places, labouring men eat earlier than gentlefolk. Timothy's house was so silent that it might have been empty. And yet the door was open. I cautiously peeped in, and saw Costanza.

She was stirring a cauldron on the stove. I stood watching her for a moment. When she did it, this homely task became graceful, became noble . . .

She turned and saw me, and cried out.

"Are you afraid of me?" I asked, as I came in.

"Oh Tom! Thank God it's you! I've been fancying, all day long, that people were following me. And now the strangest thing! I knew that Rosa wanted to see Federico, so I came out here and told her that I would cook Timothy's supper while she went to our house and made Federico's supper and took it to the prison. Well! I cooked this stew for Timothy, and he came home about an hour ago. But he wouldn't eat. He wouldn't even sit down. When I told him where Rosa was he looked at me as if he'd like to kill me, and then he picked up that heavy lock—something he bought to put on the pig-house door—and I thought he was going to throw it at my head. Tom, I ducked! Then he threw the lock on the floor, and shouted something in English, and went running to the town. And here I am trying to keep the stew hot without burning it, not knowing when he'll be back, or whether he'll be back. What's been happening in this house?"

I told her. Costanza sat down at the table, put her face in her hands, and wept. I said I was ashamed of my son.

"Oh, no, no!" she sobbed. "You must never say that. I can understand him. In England he was only a labouring man. Nobody cared whether he had a good brain, or could read. And here he has what's almost a learned profession. Men from the universities are not ashamed to do that work—and some of them don't do it half so well. He is quite well paid, you know, and very much respected. Geneva's given him a wonderful new life—how can he believe there's anything wrong here? But my poor little Rosa! Oh, Tom, the whole day's been like this. I couldn't persuade one lawyer to defend Federico, and when I came home there was a letter from the Duchess of Amalfi, telling us how happy we were to be here."

Her tears broke out afresh, and I did not know what to do. It is very hard to comfort a weeping woman, unless you touch her. The previous day, I had patted Rosa's hand, and felt no more than if I were comforting a child. But I knew that, if I touched Costanza, the first pat on the shoulder would turn into a caress. I should find one hand sliding round her waist, the other hand beginning to touch, to stroke . . .

I looked round. I had left the door open, as good Catholic ladies do when the priest comes to call. Costanza, in her agony of weeping, would not hear if I closed it. She would not observe the moment when consolation became caress. She would let me hold her, at least for a moment. I could press my body against that beautiful, beautiful softness . . .

I went to the door, but did not close it. Instead I sat down on the step, keeping my back to her. Her sobbing abated a little, but soon she cried out, as if this were the last straw: "Why are you making such a noise with that key?"

For the first time, I saw that I had in my hands the lock which Timothy had thrown to the floor. I had not known that I was picking it up. I had not known that I was pushing the key back and forth in it, back and forth . . . I thought of the word *knock*—to knock a nail in, to put a key in a lock . . .

I put the lock down. Over my shoulder I asked her: "Is there a clean towel in this house?"

"A towel?" she repeated in a daze.

"I want to swim in the river.'

She found me a towel. I took it carefully, not touching her hand, and went to the bushes on the river bank.

The water was ice cold; it took my breath away. There was, besides, a current so strong that I knew it would be risky to lose my footing. I came out almost at once, breathing hard, like a man who has escaped a great danger.

While I was drying myself I observed a movement in the bushes. I looked once more, and then pretended to see nothing. But I have never dressed myself more quickly.

Costanza was once more stirring the stew. She hung the towel up to dry, and said: "That was a short swim."

"Long enough to clear my head. It was not your fancy; there is a man watching you. He is in the bushes now. If you want to keep your good name you must leave here at once, and be back with your husband before nightfall. Ask one of the neighbours to mind the house and the stew."

She acted without wasting a gesture or a word. I thought the neighbours whose help she enlisted seemed surly. These people could not wish to be involved in danger. But they said yes; they would help.

For fear of the man who was watching her, I would not let her walk back to the town alone. But, because of the same fear, I would not offer her my arm. We walked in an awkward separateness, like people who have quarrelled. But this was nothing to her; she was lost in bitter thoughts.

"You see that plateau to the right?" she said. "That's the Plain of Champel, where they burned Servetus. And on the left, but nearer the city gate, is Plainpalais, where they burned the witches." Then she began once more to lament Rosa's trouble. "It has all been our own fault! We should have taken Timothy into our confidence from the beginning. These habits of secrecy! There are, first, the things which cannot be put in a letter. A note saying we're alive and well – that's as much as we can safely send from here, or they can safely receive in Naples. That's how we came to mislead the Duchess of Amalfi. Then there are the things which must not be said to an outsider. If you had come to Geneva a year ago, Tom, neither Federico nor I would have told you that there was anything wrong here. If you had asked us

then about Servetus, we would have begun to talk about something else."

"That's what you did," I reminded her. "When I asked you about Servetus, ten days ago, you flared up—and then began to talk about the witch trial years before."

"Is it only ten days ago I was still evading the question? A year ago I wouldn't have mentioned the witches. I'd have said: 'There have been some excesses. Mistakes have been made.'"

I said I had been told that already.

"Yes; it's the customary phrase for outsiders. And then there are the phrases the Italian exiles use to Genevans who ask about our beliefs. 'These are matters which require great learning.' They require no such thing; a child can see that Calvin's doctrine of predestination is nonsense. We used to say so freely, but only in Italian. Then, about seven years ago, Galeazzo came here and began to carry tales to Calvin. Now there are other phrases, which are to be used when Galeazzo is present. Timothy, we are so entangled in these habits that, although you're a Parisot and Timothy's a Protestant, we can say more to you, in Italian, than we could say to Timothy in French."

"It's like Rome," I said. "There are things which must be said in Latin, to keep them from the communicants, and things which must be said in Italian, to keep them from the French cardinals, and things which must be said in French, to keep them from the Pope."

"But we did not come here to live in Rome! Calvin has been wrong, wrong, and it's done much harm in the world."

We were now almost at the city gate. From [illegible] name Timothy and Rosa Costanza, [illegible] the girl in her arms. Timothy and I stood [illegible] the same black brows, the same angry eyes. Then he stepped on [illegible] eyes, and I went down on [illegible] and [illegible].

"Has your wife forgiven you?"

"Oh, I hope so, sir. I haven't asked her yet, you see. It's all been a mingle-mangle . . . But [illegible] —I tell you, sir, I would [illegible]."

I could see that he [illegible]. While the women were whispering together, I [illegible] and [illegible] breeches [illegible], and tell me what [illegible].

"Well, sir, after you left us last night, we went on quarrelling, because of what Rosa said about Calvin. I could not let myself believe it. And yet she's very beautiful, and I couldn't stop . . . I couldn't stop myself, not when I felt I hated her. And she said it was horrible, done with hate, and she cried herself to sleep, and that made me feel so wretched, I couldn't sleep at all. And this morning, at work, they were all asking me what I thought of the Doctor's arrest. Because they'd seen him at the wedding; they thought he looked a good man. I didn't tell them what Rosa had said; I couldn't. I just refused to say one word against Calvin. And then, at dinner-time, Mr. Knox came to join us, and they asked him what he thought of the arrest. And he burst out: 'It's just some poor soul who's dared to say a word against the Pope of this place!'"

"John Knox said that?"

"He sometimes does come out with more than he means, when he's in a temper. These last few days he's been quarrelling with Calvin, about a pamphlet he wants to write. Calvin won't let him attack Elizabeth, or tell Englishmen to set up a republic. And the dispute is all mixed up with you, sir. Did you know that?"

"I had heard something."

"Mr. Knox asked me today if you were a close friend of Princess Elizabeth. I said I didn't know. And he said: 'You may depend on it he is. That's not a man to risk his life. When he took your place in prison he knew he had some powerful friends to get him out again.'"

"I am very glad he thinks so."

"But sir, that was insulting to you. I'm afraid I began shouting at Mr. Knox. And he said you'd boasted of seducing a nun."

"I thought that was good Protestant behaviour."

"Well, I denied it. Or I said it had nothing to do . . . I'm not sure what I said, because, in the midst of the shouting, one of our lads yelled out: 'Who won the Battle of Flodden?' There was such a to-do after that, we forgot poor Doctor Bologna."

"Timothy," I said, "I am not asking you to tell lies. But, for the present, if anyone says I'm a bosom friend of Elizabeth, please don't contradict them."

"I'm past contradicting anyone, sir. I don't know my arse from my elbow. When I came home, and Mistress Bologna told me that

Rosa had gone to the prison, all I could think of was to go and fetch her back. Whether to beat her or to—I don't know, sir, what was in my mind. Just as I was coming into the town, here, by this gate, two of the Elders stopped me. They asked me point-blank—had I found my bride a virgin? I was so taken aback I said: 'Yes' at once, without thinking to ask what business it was of theirs. They kept on at me—was I quite sure? And then I did begin to ask why they should poke their noses in. And one of them said: 'If you are not quite sure, Maître Calvin would be interested.' I showed them my two fists, like this"—Timothy clenched his great workman's hands—"and I said: 'I don't care who it is, there's one of these ready for him, if he blackens my wife's name!'"

"You're too ready with your hands," I said.

"I'm sorry, sir, but they are useful sometimes. When the Elders saw them they went—I didn't see where. I was trembling all over. Because that sort of question is what we're used to, in England, from the Papist magistrates. Whenever they arrest one of the Brethren, they try to make out he's been living wickedly. And I knew that these Elders weren't only slandering Rosa—they wanted to make out that the Doctor had done wrong, when she was in his house, under his protection. Nobody who knows the Doctor could honestly believe that."

"Oh? Last night you were ready to believe him guilty of anything."

"I'm coming to that, sir. When I got to the prison, they wouldn't let me in. I understood they were greedy, just like jailers are in England. So I paid them, and they took me by that long passage, and the stink—that stink took hold of me."

"I suppose every prison stinks the same."

"That's just it, sir! In England I was taken from one prison to another, before I came before the Bishop of London. They do all stink the same. And the moment I had that coming up my nostrils—There was no more help for it; I was on the Doctor's side."

"And Rosa's too, I hope."

"She wasn't with him then. He was sitting among his books and papers, and he looked . . . at peace. I started begging his forgiveness. But he couldn't understand what for. I was trying to tell

him, when Rosa came in with his supper. He said: 'Here she is—my dear little friend, my daughter!' When she put the food before him, she looked at me, in such a terrified way . . . I went to her and held her in my arms. I couldn't say I was sorry; I couldn't say anything. I think she understands."

"Tell her, all the same!"

As they went home together, hand in hand, Costanza said: "Now that those two are friends, I feel as if I hadn't one care in the world!"

And she entered her husband's prison with as light a step as if she brought good news. They laughed together over the spies who had followed her. "Now they can tell Calvin how to make a good stew!" Then they laughed over my conversation with Galeazzo.

"I suppose he did not tell you," Federico said, "that a man condemned by the Small Council can appeal to the Council of Two Hundred. Servetus tried to do that. The Small Council broke their own laws by preventing him. Calvin said the very request was proof that Servetus had secret friends in Geneva. I shall make the same request, whether I have any friends or not."

"Oh, you have some," said Costanza. "You'd never believe how many people have crept up to me crabwise, and offered me money, so long as they could give it without being seen."

This, however, saddened Federico. "They offered you charity?" he said. "Oh, my poor, poor girl! Now aren't you sorry that you married me?"

"Anyone would think, to hear you talk, you didn't believe in predestination. What could I ever have been, if not your wife?"

Federico said, smiling: "You might have been a duke's mistress."

"What!"

"Well, my dear, I did not like to tell you this at the time, but just after we were married my brother said to me: 'I'm glad you took her. If she had stayed longer in my house, I might not have been able to keep my own thieving hands off her.'"

Costanza snorted. "He would have had his thieving hands chopped off at the wrist."

The Countess now joined us, and told Federico of the letter from the Duchess of Amalfi.

"This is the worst thing on my conscience," Federico said. "In all

the years we've been here, we should have found some way—even a dangerous way—to tell her the truth."

I suggested that, if it made this Duchess happy to believe in an earthly paradise, there was perhaps no harm done. To all of them this view seemed utterly strange.

"She is not a child," Costanza said, "to be made happy by fairy tales."

The Countess added: "There are my other friends to be considered. Giulia Gonzaga and a few other brave women keep the knowledge of the Gospel alive in Naples. We ought not to let them think that the Gospel has anything to do with Calvin."

"If we come out of this alive," said Federico, "we must go to Naples and tell our friends the truth."

I said: "But the Spaniards would arrest you."

"Who knows? They may have forgotten our faces by now. And some risks must be taken. While I have been sitting here, I have been thinking of some news we had the other day. The Inquisition has moved into the Medical School at Padua. That means the discoveries we made there will be lost, because we had not the courage to write them down at the time. I must try in future not to let myself be so much ruled by cowardice."

While I listened, still scarcely believing my ears, they all agreed that they must go to Naples. Then they began to ask one another what they should do with the money the Duchess of Amalfi had sent. This, I now learned, was the revenue from their confiscated lands, which the Duchess had persuaded the Spaniards to give her. It was theirs; yet they did not propose to keep a penny of it.

"Oh, we never do," said Costanza. "We don't go hungry; some of Federico's patients pay him. We've always handed this Amalfi money over to Galeazzo, to be distributed among the exiles who really are in need."

"Could you trust him?"

"With money—always. You've seen how poorly he lives. The trouble is that, for the last two months, on Calvin's orders, he's been refusing to give anything to those people who spoke up for us. Some of them are nearly starving."

"Then give the money to them."

"Yes, but we must have an auditor. You know how they twist

everything. When Castellio helped to clear a river choked with logs—and was thanked for doing it, by the Basle City Council—the Calvinists made out he'd been stealing the wood. Now they'll say we've stolen this money."

"But it's yours!" I protested. "Geneva's not an Anabaptist paradise; they don't hold all goods in common."

"It's like other places," agreed Costanza. "There's rich and poor. But not among the exiles! You see, Tom, there are Italians here who can't work, because of what the Inquisition has done to them. They have been crippled by torture, or had their health destroyed in dungeons. And so we must share with them whatever comes our way. Galeazzo does that; he keeps an agreed amount, and hands out whatever else his father sends him. And if we, at this moment, break the custom —"

"The only way," said Federico, "is to hand it out at the church door, on Sunday morning. Then everybody can see."

"Of course!" Costanza said. "The perfect answer!" She kissed him. "What would I do without your wise thoughts?"

She said it laughing, but even in that instant I saw her face change.

Federico, meanwhile, was turning to me. "I had intended to go over some legal points with you, my dear interpreter. But it is late; we can do it better tomorrow. The main point is—Castellio was right; there is no law against heresy. There is one against blasphemy, generally invoked when fishermen swear in the market. But I have not denied the existence of God, or taken His name in vain; I have nothing to fear."

A jailer now came in and said that it was time for the visitors to leave. Calmly, Federico said goodnight to the Countess and myself. But, as Costanza clung to him, he asked the jailer: "Can my wife not stay with me?"

"Not in the rules," the man said.

When I saw the look on Costanza's face, I took the jailer outside and asked him to state his terms. We settled on a bribe which was less than he had asked, but still enormous. That was the most generous action of my life, and I do not mean because it cost me money.

As I saw the Countess home I had the consolation that at least I could go on talking about Costanza.

"There is one thing that puzzles me," I said. "Your niece and her husband have been together in this from the beginning. They are both deadly witnesses against Calvin. Yet he has arrested one and not the other."

The Countess replied: "Calvin knows what stirs a crowd. And there has been a great stir here over those women you spoke of, who have gone to the stake in England. Some of them are almost adored as saints. If 'idolatry' were permitted here, people would make statues of them. I think that even the people who jeered at Servetus, when he was chained to the stake, would have wept for him, if he had been a young woman, and beautiful . . . Of course you have seen my niece only while she has been racked by fear and grief, but she is generally considered beautiful. And her good name has always been beyond Calvin's power to blacken."

When she said this, the Countess looked me steadily in the eye. I found I could not speak. The Countess went on: "Her good looks may save her, but I am afraid that nothing can save poor Federico."

"I'll do my best."

"Oh, we shall all do our best. But in the meantime I am selling my few remaining jewels, and putting my things together. Say nothing to my niece—but I shall be ready, the moment they murder him, to take her out of this place."

"Where?"

"To Naples, of course. I thought you understood that. Before I die, I mean to tell the Duchess face to face the truth about this great cause, which has filled all her letters and all her dreams."

"And then where will you go?"

"Oh, the Duchess has room enough to hide us. She has whole islands . . . Costanza will be safe there, among her old friends, once Federico is dead."

She said this calmly, but, when we came to the house door, she burst out: "How many men are there who would give shelter to an old woman, year after year? And never one impatient word!"

Tears were running down her cheeks. I offered her a clean handkerchief, but she herself briskly wiped her eyes. I asked her: "Won't you be afraid, alone in the house?"

"Oh no! Once I have barred the door I shall be safe enough.

There are not many robbers in Geneva. This is not a place for common dangers."

I did not walk straight back to the Rose; I could not. I found myself wandering up and down passages, into blind alleys. Now and then I would touch a wall, for coolness. But the stone held the heat of the day; I found nothing to quench my own burning.

The Countess was probably right. Federico was doomed. I could not, then, begrudge him a last night with his wife.

I could. I envied him with all my soul. And not because his wife admired him, or shared his ideas, or did her duty by giving him comfort. What I had seen in her face was none of that. She wanted his body.

I am not, I think, a jealous man. When I have been the lover of a married woman, I have never cared what she was doing with her husband, so long as the lying creature would sometimes whisper: "Oh, he can't compare with you!" But that night I was torn by all the furies whom I had, in the past, called down on other men. (Wronged husbands cannot always be as blind as they seem.) What increased my suffering was the knowledge that I had no right to suffer. I was the interloper. A couple who had been long married still desired each other. That was their good fortune, and no concern of mine. Who was I to meddle?

I had meddled already. I had promised to help Federico. I must meet him the next morning with a clear head.

How could I, since I was not going to rest that night? There was only one sleeping potion strong enough for me. It was now just after ten, late for a city where most people rise at four. But I knew that the landlord of the Rose would still be awake. I would accept his offer of "a good, sensible girl". I knew this good girl might give me the pox. That was a risk; the torments of unslaked lust were certain.

I was so taken up with pity for myself that I do not know when I first heard the shouting in the street. As I turned the corner, and faced the Rose, I saw men waving torches, and half-dressed people leaning out of windows. Between two grim-looking men in long robes I found my landlord, waving his hands and shouting protestations of innocence. He immediately seized me by the hand.

"Here you are, gentlemen; here's a great English lord who's been staying in my house this past week. He's never seen or heard anything amiss. Have you, my lord, have you?"

"Have I what?"

"Have you ever heard me say or hint, my lord, that I would countenance wrongdoing in my house?"

"No, never!"

One of the men in long robes—I now knew them as Elders—asked me: "What is your name, my lord?"

"I am not a lord," I told him. "Only Thomas Vaughan, an English gentleman."

"He is too modest!" cried the landlord. "All his friends are marquises and dukes. I assure you, gentlemen, you can believe every word he says."

The Elder said: "Has this man ever offered you a whore?"

"No," I said.

"There!" cried the landlord. "I told you this dirty stinking German smuggled his whore in without my knowledge. I would never, never allow it!"

I asked the Elders what would be the fate of the German who had thus broken Genevan law. They said he was already packing his bags; he would be escorted to the frontier.

"And the woman?" I asked.

"Depends whether she's married or not."

An armed guard now brought the woman out of the inn. She had scarcely been given time to dress; as they dragged her along she was trying to hold her bodice together with one hand. Her headdress was crooked; a mass of lank, greasy hair spilled over her sweating face. Her mouth was open; her eyes blank with fear. From the windows came jeers and cries of hatred. Above every other sound a woman's voice yelled out: "It's Claudine Perrault! A married woman!"

So this was adultery; the penalty death. And every soul in the street and at the windows was enjoying the thought. "Drown her!" they shouted. The guards gripped both her arms, so that she could no longer hold her bodice, and one thin, sagging breast began to escape. At this there was laughter, and the cries redoubled: "Drown her! To the Lake!"

I have seen whores flogged in London, amid shouts and

laughter. In a dirty tavern I have seen a whore showing off her scars to her friends, who were plying her with drink to deaden the memory, and give her courage to take up her profession again. This now seemed a pleasant, a civilised memory.

These Genevan faces, twisted by screaming and by hate, grew blurred before my eyes, merged into one—the face of this democracy, which Federico trusted. Why could he not see that these people had Calvin because they liked him?

I went inside the inn. The place had been ransacked. On the stairs I found some splinters of wood, a few strings . . . The lute Costanza played.

As I entered my room I heard a panting, sobbing noise behind me. The landlord came in carrying a lantern, which he held high to show me how my possessions had been ransacked.

"Oh, my lord, my lord, they turned all your things upside down. But they took nothing. I think they took nothing."

I began to count my shirts, my doublets, my ruffs, while the landlord anxiously hovered about me. I was distracted both by him and by the noise, reverberating now through distant streets, the chorus of jeers and howls which followed the whore to prison.

"There's nothing missing," I said. I had brought neither books nor musical instruments to Geneva, and what letters I had I carried in my pocket. My money was in my belt.

The landlord whispered: "Thank you, thank you, my lord, for what you said outside! Oh, my lord, I shall never forget your kindness." He tried to shake my hand.

I snatched it away. "*Salaud!*" I said. "I wouldn't give that gang a pig to slaughter. But you're worse than a pig. How could you procure that wretched creature, knowing that she was a married woman, and would be put to death?"

"My lord, my lord, I never dreamed there would be any danger. How could I know the magistrates would suddenly break the agreement?"

"What agreement?"

"There's nothing in writing. But it's always been understood that, if I let the Elders into my public rooms, to keep the Genevan citizens in order, they won't come upstairs and interfere with foreign gentlemen. Because the magistrates know just as well as

you or I, my lord, that Geneva lives by its trade. And the foreign traders can't be expected to keep our laws."

"Do you mean to say this has never happened before?"

"Never, my lord, never!"

"No other foreigner has ever had his possessions ransacked like this? Or been expelled for adultery, like the German?"

"No, never once."

My legs gave under me. I sat down on the bed and looked at the little man. Tears were running down his cheeks. He was at that moment not himself, and might be telling the truth. I asked him: "Did they say why they came tonight?"

"Not a word! It was all too sudden! They came bursting in and caught hold of me; I couldn't even give warning to that poor woman. God knows I meant her no harm. A good woman, my lord; she doesn't do it for pleasure, only to earn dowries for her daughters."

"With her husband's knowledge, of course."

"Oh, my lord, don't say that, or he'll be hauled off too; and then who's to look after the children?"

"Are you sure they gave no reason for coming tonight?"

"My lord, if you'd lived in Geneva as long as I have, you'd know that things don't happen for a reason."

There, I knew, he was mistaken. When I was alone again I thought how well Calvin and Galeazzo had planned this. They knew that Elizabeth was a lady of strict virtue; she would think adultery a good reason for expelling anyone, even her own envoy. If the Elders had come an hour later . . .

Calvin's laws, after all, do what they are meant to do. I now felt it as a pleasure to go to bed alone. Had I really been mad enough to endanger the one thing I still had to be proud of, my perfect health? How clean the pillow looked, without sweaty face or greasy hair; how cool the sheets with no slack-breasted woman, earning her daughter's dowries by giving me the pox!

13

I was roused early by a hammering on my door. "*Entrez*"! I mumbled through my dreams. Still keeping my eyes closed, I listened unwillingly to the servant's voice.

"It's this lady, Monsieur—she said you'd want to be roused, once you knew."

"Knew what?"

"The trial! It's begun."

I leapt out of bed and started pulling on my shirt.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"Nearly five, Monsieur."

So that was how Calvin kept the law. The trial must be open to the people—but it might be held before the people knew that it was happening.

I was reaching for my black Genevan clothes, when I thought better of it. The clothes Timothy had worn for his escape were sumptuous, and he had returned them to me in good condition. Even the ruff was newly starched. Before putting it on I took off my neck the gold and diamond cross, which I had so far kept hidden.

"Have my horse saddled at once!" I shouted to the servant.

Dressed to look like a peacock among crows, I ran downstairs, to Costanza.

"They came for him at half past four," she said. "And I should have known nothing for hours—not until it was over—if I had not been spending the night in the prison. Calvin doesn't know how good you are at bribing jailers."

"Where is the trial?" I asked.

"At the Maison de Ville."

"Then go there at once. I must go alone, and on horseback."

A horse is only a trouble, in such a small town. But now I mounted my beautiful white mare, and rode through the main streets, not hurrying, but at a stately pace, as befits a foreign

envoy. My gold cross was pinned firmly to my hat. Its diamonds flashed their forbidden luxury in the eyes of the Genevans. Many of these early-rising people were about already; they stared at me, and some of them even stopped work. When anyone hindered my passage through the narrow streets, I cried out: "Make way! I am going to the trial of Federico Bologna."

Outside the Maison de Ville I called arrogantly for a servant to take my horse. The splendour of my appearance opened all doors; I was not even questioned. A man ushered me into the chamber of the Small Council, and I found myself directly facing Calvin.

He was, as Federico had said, a great man. Though he must have been bitterly disappointed to see me, he calmly bowed. I bowed to him, and then to the Council, who sat in a semicircle, at one end of the hall. The prisoner stood before them, with his back to me. He did not at once look round.

"Messeigneurs!" said Calvin. "We have a distinguished visitor, Monsieur Thomas Vaughan, an Englishman who wishes to report to the Princess Elizabeth how justice is done in our city."

Now Federico turned his head. Even such a slight effort seemed to weary him. He looked very ill. His lips were more blue than ever.

There was a general move to welcome me among the councillors. An usher was ordered to bring me a chair.

"With your permission, Messeigneurs," I said. "I prefer to stand. I would like to stand beside the prisoner, and interpret for him. I speak French better than he does."

"You do indeed!" said one councillor. "Why, I can follow every word you say. We've been half an hour tormented out of our wits, trying to understand the prisoner."

The others agreed so heartily that Calvin could do nothing, except to remark with a smile: "No doubt, Messeigneurs, you will take note that the prisoner has chosen a Papist interpreter."

I said: "Whether Princess Elizabeth and her friends are Papists remains to be seen."

"Perhaps we can now discover," one councillor said wearily, "whether the prisoner is pleading guilty or not."

Federico then told me, in Italian, that he had been all this while trying to explain that he did plead guilty to giving a wedding feast for more than twenty guests, and was willing to pay the fine

for that. He was willing to pay the fine for calling Calvin "Monsieur" instead of "Maître", though he did not remember having done so. It must have been an oversight. He also pleaded guilty to possessing certain books taken from his house. He had not known they were forbidden; he could not have known, since the list of forbidden books was never made public. However, he did not wish to dispute the point. It was the charges of heresy which, he contended, had no basis in Genevan law.

"What!" exclaimed Calvin, when I had translated all this. "Are you telling the Seigneurs that they have no power to try you?"

"No doubt they have the power," Federico replied. "My uncles had the power to strangle my mother, and my brother and sister too. They had the power to assassinate my father, and after all this they had the power to live unpunished. Yet God is not mocked. Rome, which permitted these murders and so many like them, was ravaged from end to end. Bishops and Cardinals were dragged through the streets, hoisted backwards on to donkeys, and pelted with mud. The Pope had to flee in a basket of dirty washing."

"What has this to do with us?" a councillor asked.

"Only a sworn enemy of Geneva," said Calvin, "could make such a comparison."

"I am pointing out the difference," Federico replied. "Rome rules by power, Geneva by law. It is to your own laws which I now appeal. You have no law which makes heresy a crime."

Calvin asked: "Are you quibbling on a point of law?"

"Since my life depends on it, I am."

"Don't you know you can be tried for blasphemy?"

"Yes, but I have not committed blasphemy."

"Then what else do you call your continual jeering and cavilling over matters which are never a subject of dispute among pious people?"

"I do not know what matters you mean."

While I translated back and forth, I was wondering what had become of Costanza. She should have reached the Maison de Ville on foot quite as quickly as I had reached it by my stately progress.

"Are you deliberately wasting time?" Calvin asked. "It will

not help you. You may as well admit at once that you are a disciple of Servetus."

"I cannot be a disciple of a man whose works I have not read. You have burned every known copy of his books, and there were none found at my house. But I have read Erasmus, who wrote: 'By terror we drive men to believe what they do not believe, to love what they do not love, to know what they do not know. That which is forced cannot be sincere, and that which is not voluntary cannot please Christ.'"

"Ah! You are laying down to the law to us, on how we are to please Christ."

"One thing which, I believe, cannot be unpleasing to Him is a little modesty. Let us admit that, as the Bible says, God's ways are unsearchable. Let us admit we cannot understand; we do not know."

Calvin began to speak very rapidly, hoping, perhaps, to outpace me as well as Federico. But I knew the phrases well; I had nodded over them, night after night, as I tried to make sense of his book.

"You have tried to deny all knowledge, to cast everything in doubt. You have ridiculed those passages from St. Augustine, and from Holy Writ, which plainly tell us that of ourselves we can do nothing, that we have no free will, that our wills as well as our actions are in the hands of God."

And here at last was Costanza. She had not come alone. People were pouring in behind her. The trial was at last, in fact as in law, public.

"I have not ridiculed predestination," Federico said, "because I cannot prove it is not true. It may be that we are all puppets in the hands of God. It may be that God ordained, from all eternity, that I should make you this answer, and that you should be angry when I made it. Only I do not feel as if it were true."

"Ah! You oppose your feelings to the Scriptures, then!" snapped Calvin.

The part of the room open to the people was now so full that it could surely hold no more. Yet still the people came, huddling shoulder to shoulder, pressing hard against the ushers who held them back.

"There may be different interpretations of the Scriptures,"

Federico said. "But the feelings of right and wrong, which God implanted in my breast, make me believe . . ." He looked round at the crowd, and paused, for me to interpret so far.

"Believe what?" asked Calvin.

"That you, of your own free will, choosing evil and refusing good, employed Guillaume Trie and his cousin Antoine Arneys . . ."

Though he spoke in Italian, the names were clear, and I could see Calvin preparing an unconcerned smile of contempt. But at that moment Federico staggered and fell. I knelt beside him, raising his head on my arm. Costanza was crying to the ushers to let her pass.

"Is the prisoner ill?" one of the councillors asked.

I answered: "He is dead."

There was a moment of silence, broken by Calvin's voice, "God struck him down in the very midst of his lies!"

I cried out: "If they were lies, then God strike me dead! You, Jean Calvin, employed Guillaume Trie, and his cousin Antoine Arneys, to denounce Miguel Servetus to the Inquisition at Lyons. And you persecuted Federico Bologna only because he knew this."

My words were drowned in the general uproar, but I went on repeating them, hoping that some at least of the people would hear. Calvin made use of his well-practised smile of contempt, waved a gesture of dismissal at me, and left the room by a little door in the panelling. The councillors followed him. Somebody in authority seemed to be saying (so far as I could hear through my own voice) that the death of the prisoner of course concluded the trial.

Costanza had now broken through. While I still shouted that Calvin had hounded an innocent man to his death, she silently and swiftly felt her husband's heart, his pulse, his lips. She must have been present with him at many deathbeds. Now, without a tremor, without a tear, she made sure of the fact. She closed his eyes. And then she leaned across her husband's body, and put her hand over my mouth.

"There is no need now, Tom. They have all heard you."

I looked round and saw that the ushers were pushing the people out. They went without protest, only murmuring among themselves.

Costanza, still composed, asked the ushers to carry her husband's body. They asked her: "Where?"

I said: "Lay him across my horse."

So we brought Federico to his house as heroes are brought home from battle. The people lined the streets and filled the Cathedral Square, and some of them wept, but Costanza still did not weep. Even when her aunt came running out of the house to meet us, and they embraced, she did not lose her calm. Neighbours came forward to carry Federico inside, and lay him on the narrow bed which had been Rosa's. Somebody offered to lay the body out, but Costanza said she would do it; it was one of the tasks that her husband had taught her. Her aunt helped in this. I could not bear to watch. I stood at the door of the house, once more telling the people how Federico had died. There were plenty willing to listen, and, for some reason, not one Elder was in sight.

Timothy came running; the news had reached the printshop.

"Don't go in!" I said. "You can do nothing for him now."

Timothy answered: "I can make him a coffin. I'll go and buy the wood from a place I know."

"Wait!" I said. I gave him money. "Arrange everything – not only the coffin, but the bearers, the gravediggers, the place in the cemetery. And see Pastor Ragnone about the burial service. I suppose he speaks French well enough to understand you. I would do all this myself, but I can't believe that Calvin will permit me to stay here one hour longer."

Here I was mistaken. I stood unmolested at the house door, talking to the people, until Costanza and the Countess came downstairs. Then, while one of the neighbours took charge of my horse, I went in to tell the women that Timothy had everything in hand.

What made Costanza weep at last was the word: "Coffin."

"They're going to cover his face and hide him away!"

Her aunt, holding her, stroking her, murmured that God had sent Federico a merciful death. "I pray only that I may die so quickly, and in the midst of defying wicked men!"

"Oh, I know, I know!" said Costanza. "He has been saved from torture, from prison, from the stake. He is in Heaven, and I'm happy for him. But what shall I do without him?"

She began to shiver, as if with extreme cold, though the day was warm.

"You must be hungry," said the Countess. "Did you have any breakfast?"

"No, nor did he. Perhaps that was partly what killed him. That—and not having any sleep. We had only just fallen asleep when they brought some poor woman into the prison. She was screaming: 'Don't drown me, don't drown me! Oh, my poor children! My poor little girls!' And when she had no more breath to scream, she moaned. And Federico, who had no tears for himself, was weeping for her."

I had never admired the old Countess more. She made Costanza sit at the table, and me beside her. Then she brought us bread and cheese. She sat feeding Costanza as a mother feeds a two-year-old child. Then she gently began to talk of the next thing to be done. "We must go to Naples."

"Oh yes!" Costanza wiped her eyes. "Yes, of course. I was thinking there was nothing more I could do for him, but there is that. We must get ready at once."

The Countess told her: "I have already sold my jewels. The money is all stitched into my petticoat."

"We may not need it," said Costanza. "I still have the money the Marquis of Oria sent me, stitched into *my* petticoat."

Her aunt reminded her that it would be a costly journey. "We shall have to hire grooms, and buy pistols for them, too. The roads are dangerous in Italy, for women travelling alone."

"The grooms will run away at the first hint of danger," said Costanza. "But I suppose we must have them. To be born a woman is to be born fettered."

I said: "There is no need for grooms. I will escort you. I am going to Naples."

They stared at me. The Countess asked: "What for?"

"My cousin is Viceroy there."

"Of course!" Costanza said. "I had forgotten. Oh, Tom! You've been the answer to all our prayers."

"Forgive me!" murmured the Countess. "But I must ask you—this is a real cousin? Not like your friendship with Elizabeth?"

"I have told many lies," I said. "But none to you." I unpinned the gold and diamond cross from my hat, and held it before me. "By this, I swear—"

"That's a bauble!" said the Countess. "Will you swear on our Italian Gospel?"

"Certainly."

"What are you thinking of, Aunt Simonetta?" protested Costanza. "Tom has put himself into terrible danger, only to help us. If he is willing to help us even further —"

"I am not ungrateful," the Countess told her gently. She turned to me. "I am glad with all my heart that Federico died with such a friend beside him. Only . . . only it is a dangerous journey, and we have not yet known you a fortnight."

I took their worn, tattered book in my right hand, and said: "I swear by the Gospels, and as I hope to be saved, that I am first cousin to Don Perafán de Ribera, Duke of Alcalá, Viceroy of Naples, although he has never seen me, and, perhaps, does not know that I exist."

"And this is your only reason for making the journey?" asked the Countess.

I put the book down. "Did I say that?" Looking her in the eye, I went on: "I loved Federico."

"I know, I know you did!" Costanza said. "Aunt Simonetta, why are we wasting time? They may come for Tom at any moment; let's decide where we are to meet, and when."

I told them I would wait for them at the inn, just over the bridge, in Savoy.

"Pretend you have some little errand there," I said. "Run across when the guards are in a good mood. Bring no baggage. Your Genevan clothes will in any case be useless to you in Italy. If you have anything you must bring, pack it up now, and I will put the pack on my horse, and take it along with my own baggage. But for God's sake—no books! Nothing that can bring us into danger, in the Catholic countries."

"I must keep this Gospel," said Costanza. "It's the one Federico gave me, when we first met. But it won't be in your baggage, Tom. I'll keep it in my pocket, and under my pillow when I sleep."

This I had not the heart to oppose. But I asked with apprehension how many people knew that they meant to go to Naples.

"Outside this room," said the Countess, "only Rosa."

"If Calvin knew," I said, "he would denounce us all to the Naples Inquisition."

"They have no Inquisition there," said the Countess. "The Spaniards tried to bring it in, but the people rioted. However, the Archbishop of Naples has full powers to burn us. Yes, we shall keep it a secret—not only where we are going, but that we are going at all. The one thing which frets me is that we shall have no time to sell this house. It breaks my heart simply to leave it, when it is worth money."

I said: "I did not know you owned it."

"Do you imagine," asked Costanza, "that we should still be here, if anybody had the power to turn us out?"

The women went upstairs to pack their things. Somebody knocked on the door. I opened it and saw a man in a long robe. My first thought was that this must be one of the Elders, come to take me away. But he asked in a trembling voice for "Madame Bologna". Since he looked harmless—indeed, very much frightened—I let him in. Costanza came down and he cringed before her, begging her forgiveness. She stared. Then she cried out: "Of course—you are one of the lawyers!"

"Forgive me, Madame—I had to refuse you yesterday. My wife and children . . . But if there is anything I can do for you now . . . Any help over your husband's will . . ."

"He did not leave one," Costanza said. "He made all his property over to me months ago, for fear the Small Council should seize it."

The Countess came down the stairs carrying a bundle. The lawyer cried out: "Then you are going away! That is just what I was going to advise."

Since this part of the secret was already out, I suggested to the women that they should accept the lawyer's help. Costanza could give him a power of attorney to sell the house.

He eagerly agreed. "I could send the money to you in Berne . . . In Basle, perhaps?"

"We will write and tell you where you are to send it," said the Countess.

The lawyer went and fetched his clerk. The making of an inventory, and the drawing up of legal documents, took all the afternoon. I stayed, to make sure that the women were not cheated,

and to witness the signing. The other witness was Timothy, who had come back to tell us that the funeral would be at two o'clock the following afternoon. Though a Genevan wedding may not be held on a working day, a funeral sometimes must be, especially in hot weather.

"I will be there," I said, "Calvin permitting."

Taking the women's bundle on my horse, I went back to the Rose to pack my own things.

As I entered the inn yard, and called for a groom, there was utter silence. At last a boy, bursting out of a door as if someone had pushed him, came forward to take my horse. His teeth were chattering. I went up the inn stairs amid a deathly stillness; not one servant came forward to carry my bundle. But at the turn of the stairs the landlord came popping out of his room like a rabbit, laid a finger on his lips, and drew me in.

"Oh, Monsieur!" (So I was no longer a lord.) "Monsieur, I never expected to see you alive again."

"Why? Have they been here for me?"

"Not yet, Monsieur, but at any moment . . . The whole town is waiting to see what will happen to you. What could have possessed you to say . . . what you did say?"

"I thought it was time the people knew."

"But of course the people know! We've all known, ever since last autumn."

"You knew that Calvin and the Inquisition —"

"Ssh! Don't say it again! It was enough when they said it once, those three Italians, on Guillaume Trie's doorstep. Why, Monsieur! That house is as public as can be, right on the Cathedral Square. The three of them stood there—Dr. Bologna, speaking his churned-up French, and the Pastor not making much better sense, and Madame Bologna repeating everything slowly. She's a real lady! That noblewoman's voice of hers—high-pitched and clear—that always carries farther than she thinks. Everyone heard her. And then, when they heard Guillaume Trie denying it all . . . God bless you, Monsieur, we all know Guillaume Trie. If he denies a thing, it's true. Besides, all the French exiles know this cousin of his—Antoine Arneys, as fierce a Papist as Trie is a Protestant, and yet the two of them are thick as thieves, for all that."

I sat looking out at the inn yard. Travellers were now arriving, grooms running to and fro, and all this bustle was without a pattern. Federico had let himself be hounded to his death, and I had put myself in danger, only to tell the people what they knew already. Could Calvin fit this into his predestinate design?

For that matter, what was the sense of Calvin's own actions? Why had he persecuted the whole Bologna family, imprisoned Federico . . .?

I asked the landlord: "Did Calvin himself know that the people knew?"

"I suppose not. Who would tell him to his face? We're not all as reckless as you, Monsieur."

"The members of the Small Council—did they know?"

"Some of them, for sure."

"Then that may be why they haven't yet acted against me. They must have been breaking it to Calvin that all his efforts have been wasted. I wish I could overhear that meeting."

"I shall hear it all tonight, Monsieur, over a cup of wine. But before then—for your own sake, leave the city!"

"I want to stay for my friend's funeral, which is tomorrow afternoon."

"They'll never let you stay!"

"Tell me," I said, "how many days' journey is it to Frankfurt?"

"Only five, Monsieur, at this time of year. You might even do it in four. You'd like Frankfurt—it's full of Englishmen."

"I know."

The Englishmen in Geneva were not of exalted rank, but the Englishmen in Frankfurt included some who really knew Elizabeth, and would know that my claim to be her friend was false. If Calvin had sent a messenger to consult them, when he heard of my drunken speech on Sunday . . . This was only Wednesday; the messenger could not even be there yet.

"Are there Englishmen in the cities between?" I asked. "In Berne, or Basle?"

"A few, I believe. There's plenty in Zürich, but that's in the other direction—three days' hard travelling over the mountains."

"Very well!" I said. "I shall go tomorrow, after Dr. Bologna's funeral."

"Monsieur! Please!"

I told him that Calvin knew me as the friend of Elizabeth.

"Oh, yes; we all know that by now. But will that be enough to protect you?"

"You saw how the Elders took my word last night, and let you go at once."

"Oh, yes, yes! Believe me, I am grateful."

"Then let me stay another night, and no nonsense."

He agreed, on condition that I should have my supper with him, in that room. "For your own good, Monsieur. If you're seen downstairs the people will come pressing in."

At supper, I asked him why, if the people of Geneva knew the truth about Calvin, they still obeyed him.

"Why—because of his marvellous brain! What a cunning device that was, with Servetus!"

"Cunning? But it came to light."

"Well yes, this once. And he made a mistake in thinking it hadn't come to light."

"Surely that shows extraordinary vanity?"

"But look what good reason he has to be vain! Look how many enemies he must have disposed of, getting someone else to do it, and none of us the wiser! Isn't that the sign of a great man—how he deals with his enemies? Why, in Italy the princes hire whole bands of condottieri—"

"I've been chased by one of those bands."

"And lived to tell the tale! There you are, then, Monsieur! Nine times out of ten they leave their man only wounded, or kill the wrong person, or run away. But Maître Calvin—he finishes people secretly, and for good. And if he has to do things openly, he does them . . . Have you ever watched a man who has the art of cheating at cards? You know he's doing it, but you cannot follow his hands. Only three years ago, Maître Calvin persuaded half the Small Council to find the other half guilty of treason. And I swear that while it was happening they didn't know what made them do it. All we could understand was that eight people had their heads chopped off, and a lot more ran away. Since then we all know what's good for us."

"But how can you endure these atrocious laws? That woman last night—I can understand that; the common people everywhere love cruelty. But how can they enjoy the endless church-

going, and the dark dresses, and the dull food, and that rotgut wine? I see, by the way, that you have better stuff at your own table."

"Oh, we all do, Monsieur—all of us who have some standing in the town. I thought I'd explained that. Calvin's laws are for the common sort. There's never been anything like it, for putting the fear of God into people, and making them work . . . Why do you think we're prosperous? Because there's no time wasted, no holidays, no saints' days, no gambling, no sitting in taverns —"

"But surely that hits your own trade."

"My trade always has been with the better sort. A Genevan citizen can come in here, drink for as long as he likes—provided he comes as the guest of a foreigner. And there's always plenty of foreigners—more every year. They come here for freedom."

"Freedom?"

"To charge interest on their money, and no nonsense about usury being un-Christian. You, Monsieur, as a practical man—do you know any Catholic city where they keep to the Catholic rules against usury? Do the Venetians lend money without getting interest?"

"Of course not."

"And yet the Catholics have to pretend they're not doing what everyone knows they must do. It's a great hindrance to trade. Now Maître Calvin tells us that seven per cent is no sin; and he doesn't lose his temper if we charge ten per cent. No wonder all the practical men come to us! Besides, they know how good our silk-weaving is, and our printing. All done by workmen who think they'll go to Hell if they miss half an hour."

"Do they really think that?"

"Well, if they don't, there's enough who do to keep the rest in order. And it's for their own good, you see. The wages are better here than anywhere. Why, Monsieur, have you ever seen another country where working men are forbidden to eat dainty foods? In other places they can't afford to eat well."

"That's true."

"Geneva's grown so rich, the marvel is that some foreign army doesn't come plundering."

"You keep a strong guard on your walls."

"What use would our few men be, against the King of France

and all his armies? Why, there's hardly ten thousand of us, counting all the women and children. That's where it pays to have a cunning leader. Do you know, Monsieur, they say Maître Calvin never sleeps? That is—not more than three hours a night. He's always busy plotting and scheming, to keep his enemies fighting each other, instead of attacking us. Whenever a Genevan passes Maître Calvin's house, at some extraordinary time of night, and sees a light still burning, then he feels he can be safe. It's a fine thing to work hard and grow rich, but it's better still to be protected by the brains of the greatest man in the world. Oh, Monsieur, don't you ever imagine that you can get the better of Maître Jean Calvin!"

14

For Federico's funeral I dressed myself, once more, in my Genevan clothes. Everything else I left packed and ready at the Rose. I paid my reckoning, which came to less than I had expected. (The landlord's tribute, I think, to my stalwart lying.)

I found the Bolognas' house full of people. It seemed that every member of the Italian Church had come to bow to Federico, now that he was in his coffin. Rosa, her face tear-swollen, was in the kitchen, preparing the funeral feast. At the table sat Costanza and the Countess, with a pile of money between them. From time to time Costanza would consult a list, and hand money to some visitor, who then signed a receipt. I understood that these were the pensioners whom Galeazzo had tried to starve. Where was Galeazzo? He had not appeared by the time we left the house.

Timothy and I tried to help in shouldering the coffin. But we could not fit in with the other bearers; being Englishmen, we were almost six inches too tall. So we left Federico to be carried by his Italian comrades, and walked behind, with the women.

Costanza glanced over her shoulder at the hundred or more Italians following us. "Where were they then?" she whispered.

I said: "Weren't some of them at the trial?"

She shook her head. "The people at the trial were Genevans. They came clustering round me in the street, to ask what was happening to Federico. When I told them, they followed me in."

At the church I had to endure yet another Calvinist service—the last, I firmly resolved, of my whole life. Pastor Ragnone seemed very ill at ease. I understood why when I looked behind me and saw that Galeazzo had slipped into the church.

In a long extempore prayer, the Pastor explained to God the principles upon which He had constructed the Universe. He had chosen some of His children, before ever time began, to share His bliss in Heaven. Others He had predestined for everlasting torment. The Pastor, who prayed standing, with gaze piously cast

upwards, went on: "It is not for us, oh Lord, to dispute Thy will, or to question whether this, our departed brother, is one of Thy elect."

At this point he looked down, and caught Costanza's eye. He fumbled over his next words, and made a hasty conclusion.

So the service was, by Genevan standards, a short one. I was glad to be out again, though the afternoon sun burned us as we paced through the stifling streets, and out of the city by the Porte Neuve.

Here I had always gone straight ahead, to Timothy's house. But now we turned right, towards the flat fields where the Arve meets the Rhône. As we neared the cemetery I looked back, to see whether Galeazzo was among the Italians following.

I saw, not the hundred Italians, but a thousand Genevans. They came pouring out of the Porte Neuve, in a black, silent stream.

"Look!" I said to Costanza.

She glanced back, and, for a moment, stopped still as Lot's wife. Then she recollected herself and continued to follow her husband.

Only once more did she stop, and that was to show me the little grave of her baby. The Genevans were coming out of the city still.

As I threw my handful of earth on the coffin, I thought: "It was not for nothing, Federico, my dear, dear friend! You told the people only what they knew already, but it seems your death has made them think of what they know."

Costanza could not leave the place for a long time. The people were pressing round her, touching her hand, kissing the hem of her dress. "You and the Doctor saved my life in childbed," I heard one woman say. And another: "I could not pay you when you came to my little boy. Take the money—please take it now!"

Costanza wept, but the Countess looked on with a face like marble.

"Surely," I whispered to her, "this must be the end of Calvin?"

She thought not. "Who else is there to rule Geneva? But I think he will never again prosecute anybody for heresy."

We went back to the city at last, the people still following. As we walked towards the house I looked back several times, and saw

that great crowd quietly, by twos and threes, disperse. A shoemaker slipped back to his little open workshop, and took up his tools again. A housewife stopped at her door and picked up a bucket, as if she had left the house only to fetch water. The Countess was right. The people had shown Calvin what they thought of heresy trials, but they were not going to revolt.

One thing the crowd had done; it had rid us of Galeazzo. I supposed that he was making an urgent report to Calvin. Certainly he had been at the graveside, but he was nowhere to be seen when we reached the house.

Besides the lawyer, and Timothy, and myself, only a few Italians came to join the women at their funeral feast. We were packed far too closely for comfort in that house, and we had little to say to one another. The Italians asked Costanza whether she meant to stay in Geneva, and she began to weep, which saved her from answering. I could see that they took her tears as a reproach. And everything they said sounded like an apology. These were the people who had spoken up for her and Federico at first, and had suffered for it, and had, one by one, fallen silent. None of them stayed long. The lawyer waited until the Italians had gone, and then assured Costanza that he did not mean to cheat her over the price of the house.

When he too had gone, I heard an irregular banging from upstairs. "Oh, that door!" said the Countess. "Last night it swung loose and woke us. It won't stay shut."

"Why didn't you tell me?" said Timothy. "I'll put it right for you." He had his bag of tools with him; he had made the coffin in the house. The Countess took him to show him what was wrong. Rosa gently, swiftly cleared the table, and went into the kitchen to wash the dishes.

"Oh! I must help her!" Costanza said, starting up.

"Sit down!" I told her roughly. I shut the kitchen door and stood with my back to it. She stared at me.

"Forgive me," I said. "I have been waiting all day to see you alone. I must have these few minutes. Costanza, promise never to repeat to anyone what I am going to say."

"I promise."

"Not to your aunt—not to Rosa —"

"I have promised."

"And . . . and don't laugh at me."

"Laugh?" she repeated blankly.

"There is something about our journey I must tell you at once. Because I dare not stay one more night. I shall go into Savoy, to the inn."

"Very well. We'll join you there tomorrow. The evening's the best time for crossing the bridge. Only, Tom, don't come forward to meet us. Let Calvin think we are travelling alone."

"But Costanza, before you come, you must know . . . I was going to let you begin this journey, without telling you, but . . . The man we have just buried has made such a change in me that I can't deceive you now. Your aunt's suspicions of me are quite right."

"You're not the Viceroy's cousin?"

"I am, but I care nothing about the Viceroy. I don't want to see him, unless it will help you. I would be making my way back to England, hoping for Queen Mary to die before I got there, if I weren't drawn to Naples by . . . The truth is, Costanza, that, if you travel with me, you are trusting yourself to a man who is in love with you."

I had got it out at last. All I received in return was a cold stare. I swallowed hard and succeeded in saying the words I had never before used to any woman. "I mean honourably. I mean that if, when your time of mourning is over, you could think of another marriage—"

She burst into tears. I swore I had not meant to insult her.

"No, I'm not insulted, but . . . You could not have chosen a better way to make me feel my loss. To be offered love by the wrong person . . ."

I turned away.

"Oh, I'm sorry. It's not your fault that you are not Federico. Tom, you have done right to be honest with me. Now I must be honest with you. I think you should not come with us. My aunt is right; servants and grooms can be hired. It's not that I'm afraid of you. I suppose that you will not touch me against my will."

Why should she suppose that? There was nothing I was more likely to do.

"And you will never be any temptation to me. Besides, I have my aunt with me to protect my good name. It's only that I don't

want to lead you on a wild-goose chase. Because you must remember – I am going among people who understand me. We've shared the same ideas, read the same books . . . I shall never call myself a Calvinist again. But I shall always, always be a heretic, and I must be with my fellow-heretics. You have been very kind to us, Tom; I shall not forget what you did for Federico. It's just because I am so grateful to you that I cannot let you waste your time."

I muttered: "What else would I do with my time?" But of course there were thousands of better things to do. My pride was telling me to leave her at once. Never before had a woman told me so calmly that I was no temptation to her. I had always been a temptation, and, as a rule, an irresistible one. I could ride where I liked, out of this atrocious place, and within a few days find some woman sweetly welcoming me to bed. I closed my eyes, trying to picture this yielding woman, and saw nothing but the waving of torches, and a greasy, doomed whore.

I burst out: "Forgive me for doing this terrible thing! Forgive me for speaking like this on the very day . . . I swear I won't intrude on your grief again. But let me come with you! You may keep your aunt always by your side; you may speak to me of nothing but religion; only let me see your face this little while, before you hide for ever among your friends!"

She sat silent for a minute, and then said: "I don't know . . . I can't think . . . Too much has happened today. Tom, I still think you should not come with us. But we'll come to the inn as we said, and then perhaps we can talk reasonably."

To know for certain that I should see her again was enough to keep me quiet. Indeed, I had to be quiet. Timothy was now coming downstairs, having mended the door. Costanza thanked him quite calmly, and then went into the kitchen. I began to take my leave of the Countess. Even as I did so, there was a knock on the door.

The Elders had come to expel me from Geneva. So as to waste no time, they had brought my horse, already laden with my baggage. I made sure that everything was there, including the women's pack. Then I kissed Rosa, wishing with all my heart I could call her my daughter. I kissed the cold hand Costanza offered me. Last, I embraced Timothy, and said to him in English:

"This means that Calvin has regained his grip of Geneva. Thank God I am only to be expelled, not imprisoned! I suppose Calvin still thinks I may be a friend of Elizabeth."

"And isn't that true?" asked Timothy. "Haven't you really any powerful friends?"

"I'm afraid not. I'll never be able to get you a place at court."

"I don't want one," Timothy said. "I only want to know—when you took my place in prison, did you truly risk your life?"

"Yes—what of it? I thought my life was useless."

I saw joy colour his face. He was determined not to believe I was his father, and yet he wanted to be proud of me.

"I shall never be able to repay you," he said.

I told him he might, by helping Costanza and the Countess. He swore he would do all he could, and so I left them in his care. Amid my grim attendants, I rode out of Geneva.

When I had crossed into Savoy, I rode up to the niche which held the statue of the Virgin. I dismounted, fell on my knees, and kissed the Virgin's feet.

This was a gesture intended to be seen. What I had not expected was the difficulty of getting to my feet again. I leaned hard against the wall, and pretended to be studying the wooden plaques, each displaying the coat-of-arms of some nobleman who had stayed at the inn. The newest one, honouring the Marquis of Oria, did full justice to his unicorns. Indeed, the workmanship was exquisite.

I controlled my trembling just long enough to lead my horse to the inn yard, where the frontier guards could not see me. Then I vomited. For the rest of that evening I was a prey to vomiting and the flux. There was a deathly cold at my stomach; I shook like a leaf. The landlady, without surprise, told me to go to bed. Then she brought me a little mulled wine. She said people often showed the same sickness, when they were free of Geneva. "It's the relief."

I knew very well it was cowardice. Nature, which never intended me for a hero, was punishing me for putting up such a bold front. But I told the landlady: "What made me sick was that place and its monstrous laws."

"Monsieur! Don't say a word against the laws of Geneva! They're the breath of life to us. How ever should we make a living, out here in the wilds, if it weren't for the Genevan ladies,

running over here for frills and scent, and sweet pastries, and good wine? And ready to pay anything – up to four times the price!"

I soon found that she had other ways of making money. I told her to prepare a room for two ladies who would be arriving next day. "They'll need new clothes," I said. "Can you send for a seamstress?"

"Oh, certainly, Monseiur! We have the same thing every time people run away from Geneva. If they look like Genevans they'll be arrested for heresy in Savoy. I expect the ladies will want to look at my stock of bright-coloured materials?"

"No; the dresses will have to be black. Both ladies are in mourning."

"Oh! You mean Madame Bologna and the Countess. When I heard the poor Doctor was dead, I thought it wouldn't be long before we'd see them over here."

"Ssh!" I said. "They'll have to travel under other names."

"Of course! Then you'll want passports for them. I have just the man for you; I'll send to the town for him when I send for the seamstress."

I had seen this "town" from a distance; it looked like a huddle of wooden huts. "Can anybody there give us passports?" I asked.

"Not give, Monsieur – sell. Oh, but he's worth every penny! A real artist! He made those coats-of-arms outside."

"What's the price?" I asked.

"Ten crowns for each passport."

"What!"

"Parchment costs a lot, and then there's his time . . . And I'm entitled to my commission, Monsieur; after all I take a risk as well. But there is a slight reduction, if you show him a real passport he can copy."

I was back in the world I understood, of long bargaining, of agreements made at last over a bottle of wine.

The passport forger came early the next morning, with parchments, pens, ink, brushes and sealing-wax. I was now quite well. I showed the man my own passport, and wrote out the names he was to insert instead of my own. I could not expect the women to pretend they were anything but Italians, or to refrain from calling each other by the names they generally used. But they could be the Italian widows of English merchants, returning to their

families in Naples. It was likely that an English clerk, writing passports for them, would mangle their names a little. So I called them: "Mrs. Constancy Bullen" and "Mrs. Simonet Pascall". Then I showed the forger where he was to put "she" instead of "he", and "her" instead of "him". He copied letter by letter with a swiftness and skill that amazed me. Cardinal Pole's signature he did in a different ink, exactly catching the quaver of a man in poor health. The Cardinal's personal seal he carved out of a blank seal, using a tool that seemed no more than a pin. Last, he folded each passport as mine was folded, and rubbed the creases with grit and sand, to make the parchment seem worn.

I thought such artistry well worth the money. "It must be hard for you," I said, "to copy words in a language you don't know."

"Oh, that makes no difference to me, Monsieur. If it's French, I still don't know what it says. I can't read or write."

"But I've just seen you writing."

"That's copying, Monsieur. I've copied French and Savoyard passports so often, I could do it in my sleep. But it's only lines and curls and fish-hooks to me. God's honour—I can't read."

I was not prepared for the thought that came suddenly into my mind. *Geneva would never waste a man like this. In Geneva he would have gone to school.*

That afternoon, as I rode into the little town, to see a horse-dealer the landlady had recommended, I was offended by the whine of children begging. I saw men throwing dice outside a tavern, and thought: *Why aren't they working*? The horse-dealer's wife greeted me at her door, and I thought: *Why does she wear a bright red dress, if she can't keep it clean*? The horse-dealer himself wasted a full hour in showing me beasts which were clearly lame or broken-winded. When at last I persuaded him to show me what I had asked for at first—two quiet geldings fit for ladies to ride—we spent the rest of the afternoon haggling over the price. I thought: *Why can't he be honest, and save time*? Then I led both horses to a saddler, and asked him to make side-saddles for two ladies. Here the bargaining took a new twist. He said he would want double for working the next day, because it was a saint's day. I thought: *To Hell with saints' days!* Feeling as tired as if I had done a day's work, I prepared to lead the two geldings back to the inn.

Then I remembered that the women would look very strange, in any Catholic country, if they did not wear crosses and rosaries. Wooden ones, painted and gilded, would do. I asked where such things could be bought, and was directed to the house of the same man who had forged the passports. He had a stock of holy objects which he brought outside to show me. I chose two crucifixes and two rosaries, which were pretty things—*in a trumpery way*, I found myself thinking. Then we began the usual bargaining. When I shouted, the man said: "But, Monsieur! These have all been blessed by a Bishop. They'll bring you good luck."

This time, I said out loud what I thought. "*Merde!*"

After supper, I sat in my room and wrote a letter to the Banca Giro, saying that I would draw my five hundred ducats from their agent in Genoa. I wrote with deliberate calm, only now and again glancing through the window, which overlooked the bridge. Or, rather, I glanced between the slats of the shutter. Costanza had told me not to show myself, and this was clearly good sense. If Calvin wanted to denounce these heretics, let him denounce two women travelling alone—who would indeed be conspicuous figures in Italy.

I gave the letter to the landlady. She said that the postboy would be coming early the next morning, but added: "Monsieur, letters are opened, sometimes . . . It's not about religion?"

"Why should I write about religion? My only concern is money."

"Oh, thank God!"

I went back to my shuttered window. The sun was low. The fields, now almost in their last perfection, lay waiting for the harvest. Mountains and lake were utterly at peace. It was a scene of great beauty, all empty, all meaningless, till I should see, on the road between the cornfields, the woman who did not want me.

The landlady came up to say: "The seamstress is here. No sign of the ladies?"

"Not yet."

She made an anxious clucking with her tongue. "They've left it too late. The guards on our side say that the guards on their side have been forbidden to let anyone through without a pass."

"But they always have been forbidden to do that. Madame Bologna uses bribes and smiles to get through."

"So do the other ladies, and that's my livelihood! But today I haven't had one customer from over there. Not one!"

"Can the river be forded?" I asked.

"There's one place where it can, on horseback—not on foot. That's a cruel current. Besides, they'll put guards at the ford." Then she put my worst fear into words. "The ladies may be in prison."

I leaned my head against the shutter, and closed my eyes. I thought of Federico's father, looking back from a safe place, and seeing his wife surrounded. Like him, I would refuse to believe her dead, would involve myself in hopeless, unjust wars to save her. Because, if I were not there, who could help her? That cringing lawyer? Or Timothy? He was a good lad, but he had not inherited my talent for deceit and stratagem.

The landlady cried out: "There they are!"

I dared to open my eyes, and saw the two black figures walking slowly, almost dawdling, like any ladies out for an evening stroll. The landlady made to fling the shutters open, but I gripped her hand.

"Whatever chance they have," I said, "is lost if we're seen waiting for them."

So she and I stayed motionless as those two came slowly, slowly nearer. Costanza was at last so close that I could see her smile, when she spoke to the frontier guards.

They shook their heads and crossed their pikes to bar her way. As if it were a matter of no consequence, both women shrugged their shoulders and turned aside, to Timothy's house.

He had sworn to help them, but what could he do? I wanted to shout advice. "You swam two strokes in a calm lake—don't imagine that you can swim the river! Don't use those great fists of yours against men with pikes!"

Then I remembered that in Timothy's house there was a better brain than his. Rosa was quick-witted. Rosa would know what to do.

In twenty minutes or so they all four came out of the house. Evidently they had been drinking together. Timothy still carried a pewter mug, and a spoon with which he stirred something inside it. No doubt he was following the barbarous English custom, of mixing sugar with wine. When they reached the road the women,

in turn, embraced Rosa, and seemed to be turning back towards the town. But Timothy, swaying drunkenly, beckoned them. He wanted to tell them something.

And while they stood there, under the very noses of the frontier guards, he began to sing. I could hear the tune faintly. It was "The Cutty Wren". As he sang, Timothy beat out the rhythm with the spoon against the mug. I saw the horrified faces of his neighbours, appearing at their open doors.

The guards, once they understood that this was not a hymn, began shouting at him to stop. Timothy thumbed his nose at them and sang louder. He came to the last verse.

"Oh, who'll have the spare-ribs? said Milder to Malder.
Oh, we may not tell you, said Festel to Fose.
We'll give it all to the poor, said John the Red Nose.
We'll give it all to the poor, said John the Red Nose."

On the last "all" he stamped, as villagers do in England. Then, still beating time with mug and spoon, he began to dance round an imaginary maypole.

This breach of Genevan law was too much for the pikemen. They seized Timothy by both arms. He struggled so wildly that it was all they could do to hold him.

And in that instant the two women were across the bridge, and safe. The landlady went running downstairs to let them in. I still did not show myself. I watched while the guards pinned Timothy to the ground, pointing their pikes at his breast. Then I saw Rosa rush forward, explaining with large gestures that her husband had been too drunk to know what he was doing. He would (so I interpreted her beating of her breast) be sorry in the morning. Now the neighbours gathered round; I could see nothing but a tangle of waving arms.

The women were inside the inn. I heard Costanza's voice asking: "What will they do to Timothy?"

"Come up here and watch!" I called.

They, and the landlady, joined me behind the shutter. We heard the noise of the dispute, though we could not catch one distinct word. One woman pushed her way through the crowd with a bucket of water, which she threw over Timothy. The splashes

drove back the neighbours and the guards, and we saw Timothy sitting up, his hair wet, looking shamefaced. The guards, amid laughter, hauled him to his feet. He seemed to be saying he was sorry. Rosa was now on her knees, pleading for him. Once more, the neighbours joined in. The guards looked over their shoulders —for Elders, I suppose—and at last let him go, wagging their fingers in warning. Timothy very penitently nodded, and Rosa led him home.

"Thank God!" Costanza cried out. "He was ready for six months in prison."

"Do they still not know that we've escaped?" the Countess asked.

"The guards had their backs to you at the time," I told her. "They would know if someone told them, but Timothy has good neighbours."

Now at last I could greet the women properly, and hear their news.

"You saw how they closed the frontier?" said Costanza. "Calvin's in a fever, because the people are all signing a petition to have the Elders abolished."

"Probably nothing will come of that," said the Countess.

I was happy, nevertheless, at the news. "Calvin must take some heed of the citizens," I said, "since they all wear swords."

Then I gave the women their crucifixes, their rosaries, and their passports. I told them of their horses, waiting in the inn stable, and of their saddles, which would come the next day. The landlady told them that the seamstress was waiting for them in their room.

"Is that my name in English?" asked Costanza, looking at her passport. "Constancy . . . I thought English people were called Festel and Fose . . . Are we to be the widows of English merchants?"

"Yes, but not rich ones. That will account for your travelling without a maid."

"But perhaps we ought to hire a maid," said the Countess.

I said: "I always travel without a manservant. I know it means more work. I have to go into the stable of every inn where I stay, and make sure that the grooms are looking after my horse. And I have to look the horse over before I start in the morning, in case

it should have any sores, or a shoe coming loose. I know a gentleman is not expected to do these things for himself—but I will gladly do them for you as well, rather than have the company of a fool or a spy."

"Oh, yes!" Costanza said. "Why should we want a maid? The time's gone by when I couldn't brush my own hair. And when we come to Naples, that will be our best disguise. Nobody there will believe that Simonetta and Costanza di Salerno are travelling without servants."

The Countess thought for a moment. "If we tell people that we have come from England, they will ask us what it was like. And we should surely know at least a few words of the language."

"I will teach you all that on the way," I said. "That is—if you are going to let me travel with you."

"I think we must," the Countess answered. "Now that I see how carefully you have arranged all this—what servants, what grooms could we hire, to look after us half so well? We shall be very grateful for your company."

I was all this time watching Costanza. She avoided my eyes, but, when her aunt spoke, she nodded.

I saw little of her the next day. The women were in their room, helping the seamstress to make their new clothes. Only at evening, when the saddler came, did they venture as far as the inn yard, to try their saddles and their horses. Costanza patted her horse's neck, and talked to it, as all good riders do. (You should not ride a new horse until it knows your voice.) Then she raised her eyes to me for a moment, and I thought she nearly smiled.

The next morning, before daybreak, we set out southwards, along the road to the Pass of Mont Cenis.

15

The journey was a long one, and hard, and full of danger; but it was, in one respect, not such a torment as I had feared. I might follow the old romances in declaring that a true and selfless love drives out all base desire. Or I might say that, since Costanza was now laced up in a corset, I no longer felt the softness of her body when I helped her to dismount. But the truth is that, when travelling, I am never much troubled by lust. The fatigue of each day's riding, the long disputes at inns, the constant fretting over the state of the horses, are enough to send a man to bed worn out. On this journey I had to ride slowly, held back by the women, but I found this no less tiring than my usual pace. I was tired, besides, by the constant watch I kept, for fear that their Protestant habits might betray them. At our first halt, I warned them: "This is Sunday. You must go to Mass."

"And breathe incense instead of air!" Costanza said.

"Tom is right," said the Countess. "We risk his life as well as our own if we don't conform. And, after all, what do ceremonies matter?"

I had been looking forward very much to hearing Mass again. But when I knelt in that village church I could not keep out the thoughts, the new thoughts . . . *Is it true? Is that really the body and blood of Christ? If it is true, why must they say it in Latin? Why don't they dare to tell the people outright what they mean?*

As we came out of church Costanza was in tears. "How beautiful the statues are!" she said. "What harm did we think it could do anyone, to see how a mother protects her child in the folds of her cloak? All we wanted was to be rid of the nonsense. How did it happen that we lost the beauty?"

I warned her to speak more softly. Though the language of Savoy is French, we should soon be meeting people who understood Italian.

And still I had to provide for our safety from robbers. There

was little danger at first; the roads through the lower hills are well frequented, and patrolled by French soldiers. (Savoy pays tribute to the King of France.) But on our third night, as we entered Chambéry, I looked at the mountains, and shuddered.

At the inn where we stayed I met two men who wore a splendid livery. They said they were riding ahead to warn monasteries and inns that they must prepare lodging for Pierre Palmier, Archbishop of Vienne and Primate of all France. He was on his way to Rome.

I suggested to the women that we should stop and wait for the Archbishop. Then we should have the benefit of his bodyguard through the mountains. "The drawback is," I said, "that he and his attendants will take all the good lodging, and we shall have to lie down on straw, in peasants' huts. It's a choice between comfort and safety."

"Oh, safety by all means!" Costanza said. "Besides, I want to see this Archbishop. He's the one who tried to save Servetus."

I said: "You are talking too much again."

During the two days that we waited in Chambéry, I taught the women a few English phrases, and told them what they were to say about England.

"It is the best country of all for women," I said. "A married lady may ride wherever she likes alone, without so much as a maid. An unmarried girl may dance at balls, mix in men's company, hear love songs, watch plays, and still keep her good name. Englishwomen kiss men full on the lips when they greet them and show their ankles when they dance."

"Are you talking of good women?" asked the Countess.

"Oh yes! I've seen King Philip's attendants gasp when a well-born lady sprang on to her horse, and showed her leg up to the knee. They would not believe that such a woman could be an honest wife and mother – and yet I believe we have as good women in England as anywhere."

"And how did we behave in England?" asked Costanza.

"Much as in Geneva. You'd be safe in the streets alone, till nightfall."

"And where did we live?"

"In a street in London, called Cheapside. Say that after me – Cheapside . . . The upper storey stuck out so far over the street

that you could almost shake hands with the housewife opposite. You used to throw your rubbish into a gutter in the middle of the street, and some time or other a man would sweep it away."

"I can describe that very well," Costanza said. "They used to do the same thing in Geneva, until Federico persuaded the Small Council to send men round with carts and collect the rubbish properly."

"We are not so civilised as Italians," I said. "When a Londoner grows rich he does not use his power and influence to have his town made better; he moves out of it, into the country. That was what your husband did, as soon as he had saved enough money. The house he built was no bigger than a farmhouse, but it was well-made, with a roof of dark red tiles, ridged and curved to carry away the rain. The chimneys were criss-crossed with patterns of diamond-shaped brick. You had a little meadow of your own, with cows to give you milk—the rich milk that makes us English grow so tall and strong. You had a dairy, too, and a maid to make butter and cheese. And apple trees, and a vegetable garden, and a flower garden full of roses, and a walled garden with a trellised peach. Every morning your husband would ride a mile or two, to his business as a silk merchant in the city. And you, when you had leisure, and when the sun shone —"

"Sun? In England?"

"Oh, it shines. It's a gentle sun; it comes as a friend. You don't bar your shutters against it. You ride out, along the flowery lanes, and see how every turn in the way discloses a little hidden valley, or a stream all hung about with willows, or an old castle, or a palace newly built. And the hills are gentle, and the grass green, green at every time of year. Then you'll see how beautiful a country can be, when it's not spoiled by war. You'll see the villages —"

The Countess reminded me that this had begun as a description of an imaginary past. "How is it," she asked "that you are now using the future tense?"

I said: "Past and future are all one, in Paradise."

The Countess quoted the old Italian saying, that England is a Paradise inhabited by devils.

I admitted that there was a certain truth in this. "Perhaps it's because we've had no war for a long time that the people make so

many little wars in their own houses. They are cruel to their dogs, their horses, their servants, their children . . ."

"Even their children!" Costanza cried out.

"*Especially* their children. They beat their wives, too, but the wives hit back."

"If the people are so brutish," asked Costanza, "how is it that I could ride alone among them?"

"They would be rough to their own women—not to a lady on horseback. And with all this roughness, there is far less murder done in England than in Italy. A lady I once knew, Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, did what Federico's mother did—she married a gentleman of her household. The Queen was angry, but nobody strangled her in a dungeon."

The Countess asked: "While my niece was riding alone through this very odd Paradise, what was I doing?"

"How long," I asked her, "have you really been a widow?"

"Twenty years."

"Then we'll keep to that. And we'll keep to your niece being your niece. 'Tell as much truth as you can,' Thomas Cromwell used to say, when he was preparing one of his great thumping lies." Then I told her that she had met an English merchant called Richard Pascall in Naples, married him, and lived with him there. In 1533 she had sailed with him to England, taking with her her little orphaned niece, who grew up and married Frederick Bullen. "He built this brick house, and you lived in it, and in winter evenings you used to sit in the chimney corner—repeat that!"

"Chim-nee cor-nair. What is it?"

"English winters are longer than Italian winters, but we prepare for them better. No stinking charcoal stoves! We have great open hearths, where we burn sweet-scented wood, or sea-coal, which is dirtier, but makes a hotter fire. And there is a little alcove, always warm, where the oldest and most honoured person of the household sits. That's the chimney corner."

"And I sat in it, and was comfortable. Then why am I going back to Naples?"

"Because you think that Queen Mary is going to die, and you are afraid that the Protestants will take power again, as they did in King Edward's time. You want to die in a Catholic place, with a real priest by your bed."

The Countess remarked: "It seems that whenever one blinks there's a new religion in England."

"Yes; you may say that was how it seemed to you, even while you were living through it. You arrived—when did I say that was?"

"In 1533."

"The spring of 1533. You were there in time to see King Henry make his final break with Rome. But most of the old ceremonies were kept, and it seemed the same in the churches, until 1547, when King Henry died and the child Edward came to the throne. England was Protestant, after that, for six years. I wasn't there; I was a Catholic exile in Italy. So you'll have to describe for yourself how they broke the statues and whitewashed the churches. You should find that easy. Only remember that it was never as bad as Geneva—no laws against music or dancing, no ugly clothes, no Elders. Edward died five years ago, in 1553, and Queen Mary came to the throne. The old religion was restored soon afterwards, and at the end of 1554 Cardinal Pole made his triumphant return to England—with me in his train, God forgive me!"

"Did you know he was going to burn people?" Costanza asked.

I said: "I doubt if he knew it himself."

This led me to the story of my own life. Then, and in later conversations, I told them how I had been a spy for old King Henry, had been sent to assassinate Cardinal Pole, had gone over to the Cardinal in the blink of an eyelash, and had at last, by saving Timothy, become a man without a country and without a master. I might have extenuated my worst actions, but a perverse pride made me rather blacken myself. In everything I said, I was wooing Costanza, and I would not woo her dishonestly.

Once we were on the road again, there was little chance of talking. What a liar Chaucer was, to pretend that one man on horseback can tell a story to twenty-nine people, all mounted, with harness jingling, hooves trampling, and each rider keeping the necessary safe distance from his companions! Try telling a story to a single fellow-rider, and you will hear one whinny from a fractious horse blot out your finest words.

Besides, when we were in the Archbishop's train, among the

baggage mules, moving with infinite slowness towards the Pass, we could think of nothing but the next night's lodging, and whether it could possibly be as bad as we had endured the night before. As I had foreseen, all the good rooms went to the Archbishop and his attendants. The Archbishop, who was old, travelled even more slowly than great men generally do. We stopped every few miles, and sometimes at villages so tiny that we had no chance of a bed. If there was a convent I escorted the women to its door; sometimes it had lodging for them. If not, we made the round of the peasant huts. The women preferred to sleep in a hayloft; it had fewer fleas, they said, than a peasant bed. (And, sometimes, fewer than a convent.)

At Lanslebourg they had to sleep in an old barn. The peasants brought them some hay, and made one corner comfortable. Then the Countess observed that there was no lock on the door. Just outside, the muleteers had made their customary bonfire, and were preparing to spend the night round it.

"I will sleep between you and the muleteers," I said. So, when the women were settled, I closed the barn door, and fetched more hay, which I piled against it. Here I lay down, first making a great flourish of putting my pistol under my head. It was not loaded; I was too much afraid of blowing my own head off. But I hoped the muleteers would not know that.

From inside the barn I heard a troubled murmur, and then Costanza's voice, which always carried farther than she thought. "What are you afraid of? Tom is a gentleman."

If I had been the hero of an old romance, those words would have been enough to keep me warm all night. In fact I was bitterly cold. However I twisted myself into the straw, however I tucked my cloak round me, I could not sleep. I cursed myself for this display of chivalry. I had been a fool to think that the muleteers might attack the women. They had more sense than to leave their bonfire. Still, I stayed at my post.

In the morning, bleary-eyed, with hay sticking to our clothes, we hastily washed our faces in a cold stream, and ate what little bread a peasant was willing to sell us. The Archbishop came out of his good lodging, clean, well-rested, his lean old face well-shaven, to begin the day's journey. We made obeisance to him, and he blessed us. I thought he did not really see us; his eyes

looked, as it were, inwards at his own sorrows. Since he had given us permission to join his train, we had not exchanged one word with him.

That day was our worst. The road was so steep that we had to walk, leading our horses, which whinnied and shied at the gulfs beneath. From time to time we would look up and see the Archbishop, being carried in a litter on the shoulders of four men.

When we reached the top of the Pass, both women burst into tears. I thought it was from weariness, but it was only because they could see Italy.

I reminded them that we were still within the frontiers of Savoy. We had already heard Italian spoken here and there, but the dominant language, for days to come, would still be French.

At the Hospice, three miles farther on, we stopped for dinner, or rather for what was left when the Archbishop's table had been served. There was no hay at all for our horses. That night, at Novalesa, a huge monastery welcomed the Archbishop. The surrounding huts looked even more wretched than we had come to expect. We made the desperate resolution of riding, unprotected though we were, five miles down the pass to Susa, which was reported to have good inns.

But one of the Archbishop's gentlemen called us back. He said the Archbishop had seen how weary the ladies looked, and had persuaded the monks to give them a room. There would be lodging for me too, if I did not mind a monk's cell. The monks would feed and stable our horses. And we would all three be welcome to join the Archbishop for supper.

We sat far down the table, and we had no more conversation with the Archbishop than to express our thanks. But after supper the old man sent for me, and we talked for a while alone. He asked how I came to be travelling with the two women, and I told him the story we had agreed upon—that I had promised an English merchant, on his deathbed, to see his Italian wife and her aunt safely back to their own people. The Archbishop asked me some questions about my country, which I answered with caution. Then he said suddenly: "Do you think that England has infected the ladies with any heresy?"

"God forbid!" I said. "Why, Monseigneur, have you observed any lack of reverence in their behaviour?"

"No, they follow the observances. Only there's a look about them both . . . Something in their faces, as if they thought . . ."

"That the unexamined life is not worth living?"

"A student of the classics might put it like that."

"Monseigneur," I said, "I cannot ask the ladies to keep their faces covered."

"It would be a pity if you could. They are full of nobility and courage. Most people would see nothing else there, but . . . my own experience has taught me to guard against a certain look. I know it may seem harmless, and the wild notions behind it more to be pitied than blamed. But in our time we have seen the wildest thoughts put into practice. We must not call them harmless when they bring war and ruin to countless innocent people. We should fear them all the more when they are found side by side with the most precious, the most lovable human qualities. There was . . . a certain matter I thought forgotten. But now I know I am to be tormented for it still. Justly tormented . . ."

I was about to speak, but he held up his thin old hand.

"No! Don't tell me anything! I meant only to warn you – take care how you make friends among heretics!"

I bowed, and he dismissed me.

The next morning, after a good night and a good wash, I felt a new man. But Costanza was more than ever low-spirited and tearful. I asked if she were ill, and she silently shook her head. Later the Countess whispered that Costanza had been sustained so far by the hope that she might yet be carrying Federico's child. This hope was gone, and it was as if her husband had died a second time.

At the first halt on the road, I told the women of my conversation with the Archbishop. Costanza could not understand how I had let myself be dismissed, without saying more.

"I want so much to tell him," she said, "that what he did for Servetus was the best part of his life, and he ought not to regret it."

"How could you tell him that without also telling him who you are, and where you really come from?"

"Why not? He wouldn't betray us. It's time we rid ourselves of this fixed notion that a Catholic Archbishop can't be a good man."

"Don't you understand anything yet?" I asked her. "Haven't you seen how slowly the Archbishop is travelling? He doesn't want to reach Rome. He's been summoned there to explain how he let Servetus escape, and how he hid him afterwards."

"What—five years after the event?"

"I suppose his explanation was accepted at the time. But the present Pope is mad; he sees heresy everywhere. He wants to burn Cardinal Pole as a heretic."

"Tom! You're making this up!"

"Why should I lie about my own church? I love it. I wish it weren't like this. But . . . There's Cardinal Morone. The Pope has kept him in prison for more than a year, though even the Inquisition can't find one scrap of evidence against him. His crime is that he's been too friendly to Cardinal Pole. So what hope is there for this Archbishop? Don't you understand yet why he begged me to tell him nothing? He thinks he'll be put on the rack."

Costanza was trembling. "Then it's true!" she said. "The Pope is as bad as Calvin says."

I reminded her that Calvin was as bad as the Pope thought him.

"Then, Tom, who is a good Christian?"

I said: "I know only one good Christian, and he's a Jew."

"You mean Marco Rafael? Yes, Federico used to say he was a good person. But where does he stand now? Where does any true Christian stand?"

I tried to teach her the English phrase: "Between the Devil and the deep blue sea." She thought the Italian version more to the purpose—"Between the anvil and hammer."

The Countess broke in to remind us of our immediate danger. "I suppose our faces must give us away," she said, "to a man who has seen so many heretics on trial. Costanza and I have these widows' veils to wear; we could let them down sometimes."

Costanza tried this, but then pushed the veil aside. "Oh no! It makes this clean mountain world look dirty. Can't we try to seem stupid? We could let our mouths hang open, just a little . . ."

She and her aunt began to practise what they called "good Catholic expressions". I said: "Droop the chin a little more! The eyes blanker, please!" And soon we were all three laughing.

The Archbishop's way diverged from ours at Turin. When we presented ourselves to say farewell, he told me: "I have just had a letter from the Cardinal of Mantua. A fellow-countryman of yours has died there."

I cried out: "Michael Throgmorton!"

"A former steward of Cardinal Pole. You knew him, then?"

I asked: "Does his wife need any help, or his children?"

"No; the Cardinal of Mantua has taken them under his protection. That was his reason for mentioning the matter. He has been so busy over their affairs that he was a day or two late in writing to me." Seeing my tears, the Archbishop asked: "Was your friend's death unexpected?"

"No, his doctor had prepared him. He lived every day so as to make himself ready for Heaven."

"Then surely he is there!"

The Archbishop blessed us all, and so we said farewell for ever to this man who, in another country, at another time, could well have been our friend.

In Turin we rested several days at a good inn. We had our clothes washed, and our shoes mended. I persuaded the women that they must have another dress apiece, made in the Italian fashion, and of good material, fit to wear at the table of the Duchess of Amalfi. The truth was that I longed to see Costanza in a low-cut Italian bodice. But even the best seamstress in Turin could hardly persuade her to this. "I shall feel naked!" she said.

"Not among other ladies wearing the same," said the seamstress. "You can always cover yourself with a scarf." And she produced some scarves of a silk so fine that they were nearly transparent. The scarves were bought, the dresses made; but they were packed away "until we really need them".

Though we were still within Savoy, we now had to practise Italian manners. The people at the inn took it for granted that the ladies would have their meals in their own room, where no men could see them. They did not go out unless I escorted them. Indeed, they needed me. At every corner some idle fellow, boasting to idle friends, would declare himself ready to console the young widow. My hand was constantly on the hilt of my sword. To my own great relief, I did not have to draw. I could see other

men observing my height, and the length of my right arm, and thinking better of it. But I dreaded the journey to Genoa.

"The safest thing," I told the women, "is to join a party of merchants. They ride fast, though. Can you keep up?"

They said they thought so. In fact they fell behind towards evening. I fell behind with them, sweating with fear, thinking that every bush hid highway robbers. I had loaded my pistol now, but it would have to be reloaded every time I fired. If we met more than one robber at a time we were finished. Trying to hide my cowardice with a gruff voice, I shouted at the women to ride faster.

"You try riding side-saddle!" Costanza said. "And wearing a corset! I'd like to see how fast you men would go, if you had to think, at every step, of your modesty."

She was angry with me because, at Turin, I had paid a priest to say Masses for the soul of Michael Throgmorton. Wherever we rested, she would take up the argument.

"Even if there were a place called Purgatory, and even if your friend had to spend some time there for his sins, do you honestly believe that you could shorten the time, by paying a priest?"

"Well . . . Michael used to believe it. He would like to have Masses said for him."

"You mean he's looking down at you now, and he's glad that you've done this?"

"Yes."

"Where's he looking down from?"

"Heaven. I'm sure the Archbishop was right there."

"But if he's in Heaven already, he doesn't need any Masses."

"He'd still think it very mean of me, not to have them said."

"Do people in Heaven concern themselves with such nonsense? Does Federico want me to have Masses chanted for him?"

"Of course not. He died a Protestant."

"Then you think he's gone to Hell?"

"Oh no! I'm sure he's in Heaven."

"The same Heaven as your friend? Or do you believe there are two Heavens, one for Catholics and one for Protestants?"

"One would never do for all the Protestant sects," I said. "What would happen if an Anabaptist were to meet a Lutheran?

My hope is that God is wiser than we are, and knows a good man when He sees one, without these distinctions."

"That's my hope, too!" said the Countess.

At every place where we stopped, I went into the nearest church, and ordered another Mass for the soul of Michael Throgmorton. This, I thought, would show Costanza that she could not bully me.

She declared that she too knew how to waste money, and she gave alms to everyone who begged in Italian. Until we came near the frontier, and then there were too many.

At the frontier post of Genoa, the officer in command spent a long time examining Costanza's passport. Nobody, till now, had questioned the forger's work. Soon I realised that this man was more concerned with questioning Costanza.

How long, he wanted to know, had she been a widow? Had she thought of marrying again? She replied that she meant to go into a convent.

"But I cannot let you through for such a purpose!" he said. "It would be a crime."

With my hand on my sword, I said: "If you do not let us through, I shall complain to your superiors."

He laughed. He could see that we were people of no consequence, as we were travelling without servants. Though the Countess put a motherly arm round Costanza, he continued to plague her with his attentions. He put out a hand, as if to touch her, and in one black, blinding moment I began to draw my sword.

Costanza pushed my hand back, and the hilt with it. Then she leaned forward, and said something in the officer's ear. He leaped up as if he had been shot. Throwing our passports at us, he told us to be gone.

A few yards inside the territory of Genoa, I asked the women to wait for me while I went into the bushes by the roadside. Danger had had its usual effect on my coward guts.

When I was back on my horse I felt well again. We had lost our party of merchants now, but it did not matter; the roads round the city of Genoa are well frequented, and safe.

I asked Costanza what she had said to the officer.

"Don't tell him!" said the Countess, flushing crimson. "You

shameless girl! Who would think you were descended from the kings of Naples and of Spain?"

Costanza told me, however. "'Alas,' I said, 'you compel me to say why I am entering a convent. It is because I need nursing. My late husband infected me with the pox.'" Looking at the sky, she murmured: "Forgive me, Federico!"

I said: "Federico will not only forgive you; he will be proud of you. You saved me from committing mortal sin."

"What—murder?"

"Suicide. I've never fought anyone in my life, Costanza. I had fencing lessons when I was young, that's all. That man was a real soldier. He'd have spitted me like a chicken."

"A fine defender you are for a woman!" said the Countess.

"Be quiet, Aunt Simonetta!" Costanza said. "Tom was drawing his sword; I saw him. He's very brave."

I said: "I am not in the least brave, and I wish you would defend yourself, by lowering your veil. What's the matter with you, Costanza? These last few days you've been growing younger and younger, and now you look about eighteen. I didn't bargain for that, when I said I'd come with you."

And I scowled at her, for being so immoderately beautiful. She did not blush; as Federico had said, pallor was natural to her. Only now it was a pallor with a sort of inward glowing.

She turned to her aunt. "Have I really changed?"

The old lady muttered: "I suppose you look the better for all this fresh air."

"But my eyes must be red. I still cry so much!"

It was true; I saw her sometimes in the mornings with red eyes. But even when there was most grief in her face, there was no fear. The restless, tormented look, which had spoiled her beauty for me when I had first watched her profile—this was gone. Most of what she feared then had come about, and she could be at peace. It seemed sometimes the peace of despair. But when I told her stories of England, or tried to teach her English, I would see her look . . . not happy, but as if she had some hope of happiness.

She did lower her veil, when we rode into Genoa, and she heard men shouting after her: "*Bella, bella!*"

We spent a few days at an inn. I collected my Venetian money, and consulted the bankers about the best way to Naples. There

was, everyone agreed, no best way, only a choice of bad ones. If we went by land we should be travelling through countries lately ravaged by war, and perhaps to be at war again very soon. So far we had feared only ordinary ruffians, who would not attack if they saw themselves outnumbered. Wounded soldiers, or peasants in flight, would be more desperate, since their only hope of remaining alive was to rob us. If we went by sea we should be in danger from Turkish pirates.

"The land is always safer," Costanza said.

I said I had never felt less safe than when fired on from the woods, on a narrow mountain road.

"Oh, Tom! What did you do?"

"I ran away."

"But at sea we can't run away. The Turks will capture us and we'll be slaves."

"On land the Christians will capture us and we'll be dead."

What settled it was the news that plague had broken out in Lucca. It was autumn, but still very warm, and the plague would certainly spread. It would soon bar every road in Italy.

I sold our horses – taking a whole day over the bargaining – and we set sail in a trading vessel which was too small for comfort. The captain hugged the shore, always ready to run for shelter if the Turks were sighted. The women, like myself, did not suffer from seasickness, and they bore the discomforts of the voyage as patiently as they had borne all the rest. They had a cramped little cabin on the deck, and since this was an Italian ship they ate their meals there. I hated the foul words and the horseplay of the men eating alone. I hated my own stifling cabin below decks. Most of all, I hated being separated from Costanza. Since the women were not allowed in the men's quarters, and there was no room for me in the women's tiny cabin, we met only on the deck. As the weather grew colder we met less and less often. I lived only for the days when we put into port, and I could take the women marketing. We spent hours in bookshops, where we could be warm. I hunted for the books I had loved in my youth, and wanted to read again. Machiavelli, Boccaccio, Castiglione – these were now all forbidden by the Church. But in Italy, if a thing is forbidden, you are sure to find it. I bought these books in back rooms, where they lay hidden behind the "Postures" of Aretino. In the same

way I bought the forbidden stories of Matteo Bandello, the priest who had warned Federico's father of his impending murder. Bandello told the story much as I had heard it from Federico, but in the Lombard dialect, leaving the first syllables off the names. "Aragona" became "Ragona", and he called Federico's mother "The Duchess of Malfi." Costanza wept over this book. To cheer her and myself, I bought her a lute. Then, when I was below decks, and could not see her, I could hear her sing.

And now at last I was tormented by desire. I had sworn that I would not again intrude on her grief. Since all her songs were sad and full of longing, she must be grieving still. Besides, I could not bear the thought of being told, once more, that I was no temptation.

I made myself as busy as I could, helping the sailors, taking turns to go aloft and look out for the Turks. (They boarded other vessels, as we heard, just before us or just after, but we never saw them.) I was glad of the cold winds that nipped me as I kept watch. I was glad of the weariness that gave me untroubled sleep. Once, when I came down the rigging from the crow's nest, I found Costanza on the deck.

"How can you say that you're not brave?" she asked. "You run up and down that swaying thing as if it were a marble staircase."

I said I was a discriminating coward; I was not afraid of heights, or of the sea.

She said: "Queen Giovanna the Second of Naples fell in love (so they say) with one of her courtiers, and could not make him look at her. One evening she asked all her courtiers in turn to tell her what they most feared. The man she loved had such a name for courage that it was thought he would have nothing to confess. But he admitted that he was afraid of rats. The Queen listened with a smile. The following night, as the courtier went along a passage to his room, he found a host of rats pursuing him. He ran to his own door, and found it locked. He tried another door. This too was locked, and still the rats were scurrying round him. In his panic he tried one door after another, until at last one opened. He stumbled in, slammed the door on the rats, and bolted it. Then he found that he was alone with the Queen. So he had to decide whether he was more afraid of the rats or of her love."

The Countess came out of the cabin in time to hear the end of the story.

"You will catch your death of cold out here," she told Costanza. "And what do you mean by telling that wicked old piece of scandal?"

I myself was wondering (as I went below to get warm) what she meant by it. I resolved to find out. But from that moment her aunt began to be troublesome. The old lady stayed always by Costanza's side, and was there still, on the day that we sailed into Naples.

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The voyage had been a slow one; it was now December, and too cold, surely, for the plague. Yet we saw that every flag on every tower was flying at half-mast, as if Naples were in the grip of universal mourning. The captain shouted orders to anchor where we were, not touching land. Then he called to a man in a small boat, asking: "Is it the plague?"

The boatman called back: "No! Only some nonsense of the Spaniards."

"What?"

"The flags are for their King's wife. She is dead."

I cried out: "Do you mean Queen Mary of England?"

"Some such name."

All the sailors laughed, because it was not the plague. Whistling and shouting, they made ready to land. I alone found myself wiping tears away.

"Are you weeping for her?" asked Costanza. For Bloody Mary?"

"When I knew her first, she was a sweet, kind-hearted girl. I made myself out to be her friend, and then betrayed her to her wicked father."

Costanza gently said: "Oh, Tom, it was long ago."

"But she never forgot it; she cast it up in my face, when I was begging her to reprieve Timothy. If she was a cruel Queen, I made her cruel."

"Oh, not all by yourself!" the Countess put in sharply. "You sound so proud—like some Calvinist preacher, crying: 'Oh Lord, Thou knowest I have been the chief of sinners!' It never occurs to the man that he may have been only sinner ten thousand and three in the eyes of the Lord."

I said I did not doubt that I came low in the order of sinners. "But the great men could not be great and important sinners, without such petty instruments as myself. That's why I made up

my mind, long ago, that I would never again be the instrument of a tyrant."

"And yet," said the Countess, "you mean to enter the service of the Spanish Viceroy here."

I looked at the Spaniards who strutted about the quay in helmets of steel, and said: "No, I can't do that."

"Then why have you come to Naples?" asked the Countess.

I did not have to answer, because Costanza said: "Surely, Tom, now Bloody Mary's dead, you'll be going back to your own country."

"I . . . don't know what Elizabeth will do."

"Has *she* some reason to dislike you?" asked the Countess.

"She might be angry with me for telling Calvin I was her friend. But then, if she understood why I did it, she'd laugh. She has a wonderful deep laugh . . . Perhaps I should present her with the bowl of solid gold her mother gave me. A goldsmith is keeping it for me in London."

"Her mother?" asked Costanza. "Anne Boleyn? Why should she give you a golden bowl? Were you one of her lovers?"

"She never had any lovers. That was all a tale made up by Thomas Cromwell, when King Henry wanted her out of the way. Anne Boleyn gave me the bowl for bringing her news of Queen Katherine's death."

"Indeed!" said the Countess. "If she handed out such extravagant presents, her husband had some reason for wanting her out of the way."

When we landed, ragged boys fought one another to carry our baggage. They were driven off with a whip, by a man who told us that what we needed was his horse and cart.

"To the Amalfi Palace!" the Countess ordered.

The man shook his head. "There's no such place. Hasn't been, for years. They sold it to the Spaniards, and it's all pulled down—turned into fortifications."

"Then where does the Duchess live, when she's in Naples?"

"She never comes to Naples now, Signora. She lives in Amalfi all the year round."

"What! Has she grown so poor?"

"It's not that," the man said. "There's a lot of the nobility don't come to Naples now, because the journey's too dangerous,

with the Turks. We're safe here, inside the harbour, but everywhere else on the coast. . . . The Spaniards keep saying they're here to protect us, but what I ask is, when will they start?"

"And Giulia Gonzaga, Countess of Fondi?" asked the Countess. "Does she still keep the Fondi Palace here?"

"She does—but she's not there now. I passed the place this morning; it's all barred and shuttered."

I suggested that the man should take us to the best inn. But the Countess whispered that we should not be welcome there, without servants. I said: "The nearest clean inn, where these ladies can rest."

As we got into the cart I told both women to veil their faces. They were now among people who might recognise them. Not, I thought, that any veils would help us much, while the Countess went on asking, in her high, haughty voice, for the greatest ladies in the Kingdom.

Speaking French, we asked one another what we should do next. It was more than fifty miles to Amalfi. A ship, no doubt, could be found to take us there, but we might have to wait several days.

"We might find one going to Fondi," said the Countess. "We could go to see Giulia Gonzaga there."

"But it's in the other direction," protested Costanza. "And we came here to see the Duchess."

I said they must both stay hidden in the inn, while I put on my best clothes and went to see the Viceroy. If he refused to see me, or to acknowledge me as his cousin, we should be at least no worse off. If he did acknowledge me, he was bound to ask what he could do for me. That would be the moment to plead with him to rescind the fourteen-year-old warrants against the women. "I can say that you have both changed your heretical views."

"To views even more heretical!" whispered Costanza.

The carter brought us to an inn which looked passable. I was so anxious to be safe inside it that I paid him what he asked.

The landlord of the inn, with many apologies—"I don't make the rules!"—told us that he must examine our passports.

The two false passports gave him no trouble at all. But, when he looked at mine, he drew me aside and whispered: "Don't misunderstand me, signore! I'm not the man to tell a Spaniard

anything. But for God's sake, don't stay here! Hide that away!" He thrust the passport at me. "I swear I'll never breathe a word, if only you'll go at once."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"It's that name written there."

"Thomas Vaughan. That's my name. What of it?"

"Every innkeeper in Naples has been told to look out for it. We're supposed to hand you over to the Spaniards at once."

"I'll go to the Spaniards myself," I said. "Whatever this misunderstanding is, I can put it right when I see the Viceroy."

"You can't do that, signore!"

"Why not?"

"He's gone to Sicily."

This took the wind out of my sails. It was useless for me to say I was the Viceroy's cousin, until he himself chose to acknowledge me. No deputy, no underling, could do that for him.

I said: "At least let the women stay here and rest. You have no objection to them?"

"Oh no, signore! Their papers are in perfect order."

"Then I'll go down to the harbour and find out what ships are sailing, and I'll send for the ladies."

I whispered to the women what had happened. To all of us the same thought occurred at once. Calvin had denounced me. Perhaps he had denounced them too, but by their real names, which the innkeeper did not know. I must find a ship at once, either to Gaeta (which is the port for Fondi) or to Amalfi.

The ship we had come by was, I knew, returning northwards to Genoa. I asked the captain whether he would put in to Gaeta. He flatly refused, and no money could change his mind. It was, he said, a favourite place for the Turks.

But I did at last find a ship going to Amalfi. The cabin for the women was smaller and worse than on the other ship. My own bed would be a hammock slung in a corner. But the ship had one great advantage. It was going to sail at first light the next morning, and the captain did not mind if we came aboard at once.

Because of the danger to myself, if I showed my face at the inn again, I was going to stay on the ship, and send a man with a horse and cart for the women. But at the last moment I got into the cart. I could not, after all, trust anyone else with Costanza.

When we came aboard the ship it was already dark. The captain said: "There's been a Spanish officer here, asking what passengers I had. I told him—nobody but two Spanish tax collectors, going to Sorrento."

"Why did you say that?"

"Signore! I am an Italian, after all. And seeing you in such a hurry . . ."

I gave him money, and he kept us hidden for that night.

But in the morning, when we had sailed out of the harbour, and turned south, I could not keep the women from showing themselves on deck. With tears they pointed out familiar places, which were known to me as well, since I had sailed this way nineteen years before. Vesuvius had the same smoky plume as then, Castelammare the same battlements.

"There, to the right of Vesuvius," Costanza said, "there's a field like any other field. But the peasants call it 'la città'. They talk of a city full of treasure, deep, deep under the earth."

Sorrento, where we berthed before nightfall, was like a city of the dead. At the harbour some boys came forward to catch the ropes the sailors threw, and make us fast. They scarcely spoke. Nobody came aboard. There was nobody to sell us things, to beg, or to shout the virtues of one inn against another. The two Spanish tax collectors had their baggage carried by old women, who could scarcely stagger along with it. There was not a young woman in sight, not an able-bodied man. I remembered then that Sorrento had fallen victim to the cruellest of all the Turkish raids. I had heard of it while I was still in Venice. What I could not understand was how it had happened. From the harbour the only way to the town is a narrow road, which runs between high cliffs. The place, well-defended by nature, seemed also well-fortified. How, even in their sleep, could these people have let in the Turks?

The sailors told me that the Turks had landed by night on the little beaches which here and there indent that rocky coast. They had killed what few fishermen they found in their way, and had gone on to take Sorrento from the rear, where no attack was expected.

As we sailed on southwards, the next morning, the women observed a beach which they remembered as crowded with nets

and boats, now lying empty and silent. The houses were there still, and some of their doors were open, but nothing stirred. The next little beach we passed was also stricken. A mile or so farther on, there were more signs of life.

"Where the fishermen are still alive," a sailor said, "is the worst place of all to land. They've got themselves arquebuses —not that they know how to use them. They fire wild at any stranger, Turk or Christian."

We had now reached the southern limit of the Bay of Naples. The ship made its cautious way between the Point of Campanella and the terrible cliff of Capri.

"That's where the Emperor Tiberius threw down his slaves," Costanza said. "They say he had a man waiting at the foot with a trident, just in case the slave should still be alive. But how could he be, after falling so far?"

Having rounded the Point, we were sailing along the coast of the Dukedom of Amalfi. It looked harsh, poor, stern and rocky. Yet everything pleased the women. They showed me the road the Romans had made, half-way up the cliff, and boasted that it had a thousand turns between Sorrento and Amalfi. They showed me the rocky island called Gallo Lungo; it is supposed to look like a cock. Its fortifications and its castle belonged, they said, to the Duchess.

The watch towers, built every mile along the coast to guard against the Turks, put them out a little, because these were new. I saw the women, as they pointed out their long-lost landmarks, drawing more and more together, and I burned with jealousy. I was angry that Costanza should feel such delight at rediscovering a life in which I had no part. She cried out: "This very day, we shall be with our Duchess!"

I said: "Are you sure she will be glad to see you?"

"Tom! You don't know her!"

The Countess smiled at me and said: "We were so close, for so many, many years."

I persisted. "But you mean to undermine her faith. You know what effect that had on Timothy."

"Oh, that's altogether different!" said Costanza. "Timothy is — Well, no, he's a good honest boy. But the Duchess is a thinker, a poet . . ."

"She will understand," said the Countess.

And when we had landed, when some ragged fisher boys were carrying our things, the women almost ran up the twisting, rocky path, which is the only way to the Ducal Palace.

We were stopped, of course. The place bristled with armed men. The women neither told their names nor lifted their veils, but said: "Tell the Duchess two old friends are here to see her!"

The light of the winter afternoon was fading, and when the Duchess appeared I could see nothing of her, except that she moved with a brisk, firm tread. She motioned a servant to hold up a torch to our faces. The women lifted their veils. The Duchess stared for a moment, and then, with a cry, threw out her arms in welcome. All three embraced, weeping. All three were so close that it seemed nothing could ever separate them again.

It was a minute or two before Costanza remembered me. "This is Thomas Vaughan, an English gentleman, who has protected us all this long way."

The Duchess gave me her hand, but even as I kissed it she was saying over my head to the women: "You are not alone with one man! Where are your servants? Down at the harbour, I suppose, with your heavy baggage."

"We have no servants," Costanza said. "And this is all our baggage. We are very tired and very dirty, and we have no clean clothes."

"What disasters you must have been through!" said the Duchess. "To lose all your servants and all your clothes! Never mind; you shall tell me about it at supper."

She led us into the palace. All three women were talking. I heard Costanza ask after the Duke.

"You sailed past him," the Duchess told her. "He's on the island, Gallo Lungo. He is . . . ill."

"Ill! And you not with him!"

"He has his doctor there. He does not want anyone else at present."

The Countess asked after her children.

"Oh, all married, except Pompeo, who's a Bishop, and Beatrice, who's a nun."

"A Bishop?" repeated Costanza. "A nun?"

The Duchess, glancing at the servants, began to talk Spanish.

"My dear girl, what could I do? I must keep up the outward forms; I must have a priest in the house. I wouldn't have one of the drunken, loose-living sort, so I chose the most pious young man I could find. Before I knew where I was, he'd converted two of the children."

I remembered what the Nuncio had said to me in Venice. "If we could make all Italy conform in appearance for one generation, in the next generation the conformity would be real." But I said nothing. The Duchess added: "You don't know how I'm tormented, every day, by the Papists!" And indeed, her face was deeply lined with suffering. "The latest thing is—they're saying that Calvin poisoned Federico."

"Oh no!" Costanza cried out. "How could anyone think I would let Federico be poisoned? He ate nothing but what I prepared, or my little Rosa. Federico died of his weak heart."

The Duchess kissed her. "Oh, thank God I have lived to hear you say that!"

We were by now on the second floor of the Palace. The Duchess herself showed us our bedrooms, and ordered her servants to collect our dirty clothes. "They will be washed immediately," she said. "And in the meantime you may borrow whatever you need. Supper is in an hour's time."

I was not, of course, permitted to eat with the women. The Major-domo of the household escorted me to his own table. Here I was the guest of honour, but none of the gentlemen present asked me about my journey. At first I thought this a sign of consideration for me; they were pretending not to know that I had come from Geneva. Then I understood that they did not care. All their talk was about an old nobleman of Amalfi, who had no direct heir, and might leave his estate to any one of a number of people, some of whom were connected by kinship or marriage with some of those present. Great learning was displayed, and remarkable feats of memory—all on the subject of family trees. How many people find the unexamined life quite well worth living!

This dull and stupid company made me feel what the rest of my life would be like, if I had to live it without Costanza. I felt

sick with longing only for the sound of her voice. And yet, how could I break in on her reunion with her friend?

After supper I told the Major-domo that I would not disturb the ladies; I would go straight to bed. He was horrified. It would be a grave breach of manners, he said. The Duchess would be mortally offended if I did not at least say goodnight to her. Indeed, he insisted on conducting me to the door of her private parlour.

And here I heard shrill, angry voices. All three women seemed to be talking at once, with such passion that at first they did not even see me come in. It was a minute or two before I disentangled one voice from another. Then I heard the Duchess telling her friends that none of the things which had happened to them in Geneva could possibly have happened. "It's contrary to common sense!"

"We know that," said Costanza, "but—"

"Signora Duchessa!" I said. "These ladies lived in Geneva for thirteen years. I was there only thirteen days. But I can assure you that what happens there *is* contrary to common sense. Calvin preaches predestination—and behaves as if by working for twenty-one hours a day he could change the whole course of human affairs."

"That's no contradiction to us," replied the Duchess. "God predestines all things—but we still have a duty to work with God."

"Because He predestines you to have that duty? Very well. Perhaps God predestines the actions of Galeazzo Caracciolo, which otherwise would seem to contradict common sense. Why should a man go to live in the one place where he can be beheaded for adultery—and then commit adultery?"

"That's a story put about by the Papists! I'm assured, by people who really know, that Galeazzo had purely religious reasons for divorcing his wife."

I felt myself, by now, released from my promise to Galeazzo. So I told the story of the hairpin. It was new to all three women. When I came to Galeazzo's words, that the bed was not rumpled because he had pulled it straight, Costanza and the Countess burst out laughing.

The Duchess did not smile. "How dare you tell me this

fantastic story?" she said. "Are you expecting me to believe that this great nobleman, the godchild of the Emperor, the rightful hair to Vico, *made a bed with his own hands*?"

Between laughing and crying, Costanza tried to tell her that in Geneva the servants, like everyone else, went to church twice on a Sunday; that everybody, therefore, learned to do some housework. The Countess began to describe how she and Costanza had washed the dishes after the wedding feast.

"You washed dishes!" the Duchess cried out. "In the open, where everyone could see you! No wonder that you got on badly in Geneva, when you made a public exhibition of yourselves!"

Costanza cried out: "It's impossible to tell you about this other world!"

We all three tried to tell her, none the less. The Duchess, changing her ground adroitly, said that if all this were true we were surely describing the ideal, the platonic community, which all the boldest thinkers of Italy used to dream of.

"Nevertheless . . ." began the Countess.

"And I can see," the Duchess went on firmly, "that this ideal community, trying to survive with enemies all round it, has to take stern measures to defend itself. Sometimes these measures will hurt innocent people."

Here she drew breath, and Costanza succeeded in saying: "They hurt the most innocent worst!"

"I don't believe that for one moment. I've been through all this before, with some of our wavering Brethren. Their faith wasn't strong enough; they deserted us, when they heard about the execution of Servetus. I was never shaken. I'm not praising myself; the praise belongs to God; but I never was shaken. Because I know what it is to rule a state. You begin by thinking that you can rule with dainty fingers, but you soon find that you have to do things which . . . which are necessary, if the state is to survive. There was no doubt in my mind that Servetus was plotting some treason against Geneva."

"Why," asked the Countess, "do you make excuses for Calvin that he does not make for himself? He never once accused Servetus of treason."

"You seize on these petty points," the Duchess cried out. "You seize on your little personal grievances —"

"Little personal grievances!" repeated Costanza.

"Oh, yes, I know Federico was your husband. That was your doing; you insisted on marrying him. But he always was full of crack-brained notions. That business of making people bathe in the sea . . . His mother was mad; look at the trouble she got herself into!"

The Countess quietly said: "She was your husband's mother, too."

"Yes!" exclaimed the Duchess, and shut her mouth like a trap.

Costanza burst out: "How can you talk like this? You know as well as I do that he was a hero and a saint."

"Oh, everybody must agree with you!" said the Duchess. "That's always been the way. Look at all those good marriages you refused! Marrying a pox doctor!"

At this I too began to lose my temper. I said I could not understand why "pox doctor" should be a term of abuse, when it was thought quite gentlemanly to catch the pox. The Duchess gaped and became, for a moment, speechless. Pursuing this advantage, I went on: "Though I knew him only a few days, I shall always be proud that Federico Bologna called me his friend. I can understand that a woman who had known him would never stoop to any other man."

The Duchess admitted that he might have meant well. "But why should all Geneva have to march in step with him? Whether he liked it or not, it is the city of the future!"

I said: "Signora Duchessa, you may well be right. Perhaps the future does belong to the Calvinists. Perhaps they will build other cities where everything is ugly, everybody darkly dressed, where there is neither singing nor dancing, where no plays are performed or stories told in the streets, where nobody paints pictures or composes poetry, where nothing is done but work, work and the making of money. And it may be that people who can live like this, because they can live like this, will conquer the world. But why should you help them?"

"Because what they build is better than this place. You call it ugly! Do you know what it's like to rule a place which has beauty and nothing else? Where every attempt to educate the people is defeated by the Church? I've struggled all these years

with such dirt, such ignorance! And with Spanish misgovernment, which makes everything worse. Now I can't even go to Naples, because the Spaniards have failed to protect us from the Turks. I can't go to my summer place in the mountains, because we're plagued with bandits – wretched peasants, who took to arms when the Spaniards ruined them. Every year things get worse here. I don't know how I endure it. I never could have endured it, without the knowledge that there is a place where people are learning how to live. Are you asking me to live without hope?"

"Without one particular hope," said the Countess. "What you hope for – let's be honest – is that, one day, one of the foreign armies ravaging Italy will be a Protestant army. Then all the hidden, persecuted congregations, from Valtelline to Calabria, will stand up and declare themselves. Then you and all the ladies who think like you will deliver up the keys of their castles and their cities. Rome will be sacked again, but, this time, there will be no Emperor to restore the Pope on his perch. Instead, there'll be a government of sober, honest men, trained in Geneva, to lead a united Italy. My dear old friend, do try to understand that this is not going to happen. If it did happen it would not be a great awakening – only one more nightmare for poor Italy."

"Then what is to happen?" asked the Duchess. "Are you asking me to be contented, as things are? Living in this benighted place, among peasants who believe in witchcraft –"

"Calvin believes in witchcraft!" Costanza said. She began to tell the story of the witch trials, but the Duchess would not let her finish. "This is absurd! You're talking of the most learned man in Europe. And if all this happened so long ago – before you went to Geneva – how is it that you never put one word of it in your letters?"

At this reproach Costanza burst into tears. "God is just!" she sobbed. "He has punished us for all the years when we concealed the truth about Geneva."

The Duchess mastered herself and said quietly: "We are all very tired. We will try to talk sensibly in the morning." Then she summoned servants who showed us to our rooms.

I thought myself ready for sleep. Yet I was kept awake, a long time, by fear. What I feared I did not know. It was not the anger

of the Duchess. I had expected that, although the women had not. In the small hours I woke from a troubled sleep, and knew that what had frightened me was her sudden calm. It was as if she had come to a decision.

My breakfast was brought to me in my room. Afterwards I went to look for the women. The voices guided me. They were more quiet now, and I did not like that. I found myself in a stately room, heated by charcoal braziers here and there, with a window looking on the sea. The Duchess indicated that I might sit down, and so I sat by the window.

"I am glad you are here," she said to me. "Because I want you to know that you have not deceived me for one moment. You admit you're a Papist?"

"Yes."

"Yes. You went to Geneva as a Papist agent, prepared to stir up what trouble you could. You found you could make use of this half-mad doctor, and throw dust in the eyes of these women—by what means we need hardly inquire —"

Costanza said wearily: "This is like listening to Galeazzo."

"No doubt it is. I know Galeazzo has always been loyal to Calvin, even when some of the weaker sort —"

"Did the weaker sort," asked the Countess, "include Giulia Gonzaga?"

"Certainly not! She's always been firm—absolutely firm."

"Then who," the Countess persisted, "did leave you when Servetus was burned?"

"Yes, you'd like to know the names! That's just what I expected. You're playing this man's game. He wants to make the same kind of trouble, among our own people here, that he made in Geneva."

"Oh, do leave Tom alone!" said Costanza. "We've told you a hundred times that all our trouble with Calvin was before we set eyes on Tom. He only came into it because . . . because he's very kind, and very generous, and very brave, and . . . and, in fact, a gentleman!"

Despite those bold words, when she saw me looking at her, she buried her face in her hands.

The dispute went on for hours. Costanza raged and wept, the Countess groaned, but the Duchess never raised her voice. Calmly,

in a perfectly logical way, she went on defending her solid structure of nonsense. At last she rose and said: "It is better that people should think you have left. I will have dinner served to you in your rooms."

She meant, of course, that she would not eat with her lifelong friends, or let the gentlemen of her household eat with me. Nobody could think we had left, since there was only one road to the palace. I had been watching it, while I sat by the window, and observing how few people came and went. Supplies were brought in, a washerwoman or two went out, the guards were changed, and that was all. Even the Roman road—the one road northwards from Amalfi—was almost empty. From where I sat I could not see the harbour, but the ships going to or from it were few indeed.

We obediently dined in our bedrooms. Afterwards, as there seemed nothing else to do, I picked up a book and went to my seat at the window. The Duchess did not reappear. Presently Costanza and the Countess came to sit in the middle of the room, huddling over a charcoal brazier as if it would give them some comfort.

"Oh, Tom!" said Costanza softly. "You are going to say: 'I told you so!'"

I said: "It would be more to the purpose if I told you what to do next."

"That," said the Countess, "is what we are trying to decide. If what she says of Giulia Gonzaga is true, we had better not go to Fondi. There are people who would welcome us, but—as you heard—she won't tell us who they are."

"Come to England with me!" I said.

Costanza looked at me in silence. She was wearing the clothes that she had borrowed from the Duchess the night before. Now that I had leisure to observe her, I thought how a rich red suited her skin, setting off its pallor with less severity than her previous everlasting black.

The Countess was saying that England might be a Paradise. "But I'm wary of Paradises, after Geneva . . . And ships don't go to England from Amalfi. We should have to go back to Naples, and you are a wanted man there. It would be better to hide for a little while—at least until your cousin comes back from Sicily."

Costanza began to suggest the names of old friends who might help them. Over each one they pondered. Was she the sort of person who might believe them? And how could they tell? They had been so sure of the Duchess . . . They raked over the past, trying to remember who had expressed some faint misgiving over Calvin's philosophy. Which of these friends would, if they lost faith in Calvin, go back to the Church and refuse to help any heretics? One name after another came up, was pondered over, and then rejected.

I could not join in this talk, and I could not read. I sat looking out at the beautiful, dying place. If the morning had not been very busy, the afternoon was a time of utter stupor. Not one person came to the palace. At last, when it was almost dark, there was a jingling and a stirring. A man rode out of the palace on a good horse, and took the Roman road to the north. A canter, or even a trot, was impossible on those turns, but he seemed to be riding as fast as he could.

A few minutes later the Duchess came into the room. She said at once: "You cannot stay here."

"We have decided that for ourselves," replied the Countess. "As soon as our clothes are dry —"

"They are dry already—ironed, aired and packed. You will find your baggage ready in your rooms."

"How well you arrange everything!" murmured Costanza. "May we at least keep the clothes we are wearing? And before you turn us out —"

The Duchess told her sharply: "I am not turning you out! It's the Spaniards. I've just had word that they know you are here. You will have to go to my summer place in the mountains."

I knew that there was something wrong in what she said, and now I thought I had put my finger on it.

"Signora Duchessa!" I said. "You said last night that you yourself could no longer go to this place in the mountains, because of the bandits."

She gave me a contemptuous smile. "I am a woman. But if you are afraid of a little danger . . . Perhaps you would prefer to surrender to the Spaniards. They are Papists, like you. It is only the women who risk being burned."

"Tom is in just the same danger as we are!" Costanza cried out. "And we would all prefer the Spaniards to a mountain road at night. For God's sake—for the sake of the past—however much you hate us now, give us a boat! Make one of your fishermen sail us to Gallo Lungo, to the Duke! He won't refuse to shelter us. I know he has a wicked way of talking, but he was always, always good to me."

"Is 'good' the right word?" asked the Duchess. "Oh, I saw those looks that used to pass between you."

"Don't, don't!" said the Countess. Her eyes were brimming with tears. "For the sake of your own soul, don't twist what happened in the past."

"There's no need to twist it," replied the Duchess. "Son of a whore, the people called him. He was determined to show how far he could outdo his mother. All these years —"

"I know! I know what reason you had for jealousy. But never of Costanza! She was a child."

"It was a child who ruined him," said the Duchess. "A fisherman's daughter, not fifteen, who looked innocent. She was the last."

"And this time you can't forgive him?"

"I have forgiven him," said the Duchess harshly. "But God has not." She turned suddenly on me. "After what you said last night—"

What had I said, in particular?

"—don't pretend that you don't know why he's on Gallo Lungo! His face is half eaten away. It's useless for you to go there; he won't let anyone see him as he is now."

"Then we shall talk to him in the dark," said Costanza. "Do you think I never spoke to Federico's patients?"

"We shall be glad to talk to him," said the Countess. "He was never as religious as you; he will be kinder."

The Duchess, in cold, precise tones, pointed out the difficulty of landing at the small jetty of Gallo Lungo. "There are underwater rocks at every approach but one. Even the Turks never try it. Our own fishermen know the way in—but they won't do it in the dark."

I said: "The sky is clear, and there will be a moon. There was one last night, almost at the full."

This defeated her. "Very well!" she said. "I will send for a fisherman. But remember—this was your own doing!"

Again, she would not let us eat in company. Supper was brought to our rooms. After midnight a strong young fisherman appeared, and picked up my baggage. I followed him outside, and found the women, with a servant holding a lantern, and another carrying their baggage. The gates of the palace clanged behind us.

"What!" said the Countess. "Is she not even coming to see us off?"

"At least she has left us these clothes," Costanza said. "They will be some disguise, if the Spaniards are looking for two widows."

Something the Duchess had said was haunting me; something, in all that torrent of words, was a clear warning of danger, and I could not now recollect what it had been.

The fisherman led us to his boat. The two servants from the palace took the money I gave them, and left us without a word. Before we could get into the boat, the fisherman threw out his fishing tackle. It made an untidy heap on the beach. A metal thing was in the heap; it glittered in the moonlight. Oppressed, still, with a sense of something wrong, I picked it up. It was a panikin with a wooden handle—a baler.

"You'll need this," I said to the fisherman, "if we ship water."

"The sea's calm enough," he said with a laugh.

Never before had I heard a fisherman express confidence in the weather. The oddness of it made my blood run cold. I put the baler back into the boat.

The sea was not completely calm; there was wind enough to carry us along. Once we were out of the harbour the man opened out both sails, and our speed increased. I could see that he had to tack, since the wind was against us. But his tacking was curious. He took us almost directly seawards, and then swung the boat hard round, so that it was pointing to the cliffs. I felt water at my feet.

"This is a very leaky boat," I said. "Where's that baler?"

The boatman rose, cried: "*Addio!*", and jumped overboard. The boat rocked violently. But the wind drove us on, straight at the cliffs. I seized the tiller and found that the ruffian had lashed

it fast. Now I found a use for my sword. I slashed at the rope. It parted. I turned the tiller so that we would swing seawards. The boat was heavy, and made heavier by the water in the bottom. Its own momentum drove it on, despite the tiller.

The women did not at first understand our danger. They were trying to make out what had become of the fisherman.

"Has he drowned himself?" asked the Countess.

"No," said Costanza. "Look! He's swimming ashore."

I shouted: "Stop chattering, Costanza! And come here!"

I made her hold the tiller, while I searched in the moonlight for the rope which would move the boom. Still the women tried to ask questions, but their voices were drowned by the noise of the breakers. Now they saw the cliff looming. I think they screamed. But I had managed to swing the boom. I did it too hard: the boat went heeling over, and a great wave wetted us all. But we were turning. The boat righted itself. We had turned, in the very teeth of the rocks, and were going seawards.

The Countess cried out: "That man must have been mad!"

"Not mad," I said. "Well paid."

Costanza began: "But . . ."

"No talking yet!" I told her. I moved the tiller again, and made her hold it. Then I put the baler into the old lady's hand. "Bale out, Signora Contessa! I have to tackle these ropes."

They kept an absolute silence while I found out which rope led to which sail. It was not like the boats on the Lake of Geneva, and I was a long time fumbling. But I did, by trial and error, achieve my aim, which was to slacken our speed.

"Now let me take the tiller," I said to Costanza. "And you go into the bows—the front of the boat. I want you to call out if you see a rock ahead. Or if you see some little eddy or swirl, which may mean a rock just under the surface of the water."

She obeyed me, but asked: "Why are we going so slowly?"

"Because we are among rocks. There is a great difference between being dashed on a rock, and bumping gently against it."

I said this confidently; it sounded like common sense. But I had not the least notion whether it was true. My sunny afternoons on the Lake had not prepared me for sailing without a chart, by moonlight. And I soon found that I had to let out the sails

again; we could not go slowly without being at the mercy of the currents, which seemed inclined to carry us backwards.

When she saw that I had leisure to speak, the Countess asked me: "Do you believe, then, that she ordered the man to desert us?"

Costanza cried out: "It's impossible!"

I replied: "It's quite certain. And it's my fault. If only I'd had the wit to see what was before my eyes, we should never have set foot on this boat. All the time you two were sitting by the brazier, trying to decide where to go next, I was looking out of the window. It was daylight still; I could see the road that leads to the palace. There is no other road; how could there be, on that rock? When the Duchess came in, and said she'd had word that the Spaniards were coming, I knew something was wrong. I did not know what it was, till this moment. And yet I had plainly seen that she had not had word; the whole afternoon, nobody came to the palace. But a man went from the palace, and in a hurry. A messenger from the Duchess to the Spaniards."

"But she was like a mother to me!" said Costanza.

"Like a sister to me," said the Countess. "But no doubt she feels her first duty is to guard Calvin's good name. We used to think that, before we met him."

"Would she really think it right to kill us, to prevent us from undermining the faith of other Protestants?"

"She would," said the Countess, "and so would I, in my Calvinist days."

"But what a strange way of killing us!"

I said: "It was almost a certain way. You saw how nearly we were dashed against the cliff."

"If you had not known how to turn the boat!" said Costanza. "You saved our lives."

"I might have saved them far more simply," I said, "if only I had told the Duchess that the Viceroy was my cousin. I suppose you did not mention it?"

The Countess sighed. "Neither of us found anything useful to say."

I said: "I never thought it would be useful, until the Viceroy himself acknowledged me. But if only I had said it, even if she

had not quite believed it, she would have thought twice before having me murdered."

"From now on," said Costanza, "we will mention it to everyone we meet."

I thought we might be meeting only the angels. The Countess quietly said: "What trouble the woman gave herself! Planning first to have us murdered in the mountains—which would have looked like the ordinary work of bandits—and then this, to look like an ordinary shipwreck! If she really denounced us to the Spaniards, she had only to wait quietly till they arrived."

I said: "If we had been arrested in her palace, all her friends would have known that she'd betrayed us. As it is now, she can be friends with the Spaniards—she did denounce us—and friends with the Protestants—she did warn us to get away. She's outwitted everyone, at every turn."

"She made one mistake, though," Costanza said. "She would never think of a gentleman doing anything with his hands, and she took it for granted that you could not sail a boat."

I said: "The question is how long I can sail this one; it's a poor worn-out thing."

The Countess observed: "That man, when he swam ashore, was making for one of the clefts in the cliff. There are such places—tiny beaches, with a few fishermen's huts, and a path leading up to the road. Can you steer the boat into one of those?"

"I may have to. But this Duchess, who arranges everything so well, will surely have taken a lesson from the Emperor Tiberius. It might seem impossible that the slave could be alive when he reached the foot of the cliff, but there was always a man waiting with a trident. If we land, whether we go to or from Amalfi, there is only one road, and somewhere along that road there will be men waiting to kill us."

"There are the watch towers," Costanza said. "Look, that faint light glittering there is one of them."

I had been thinking of the watch towers, because it had seemed to me, when we passed them the day before, that each one had its own jetty.

"Are they manned by Spaniards?" I asked.

The women did not know. I suggested that, if they were, we

might surrender to the Spaniards. Then we should, at the worst, have time to demand a trial, to petition the Viceroy. But, if the watch towers contained only loyal subjects of the Duchess . . .

"I am afraid," said Costanza, "that she is one of those women rulers you praised in your speech, who are served with absolute obedience."

"How far must we sail," I asked, "to be out of her territory?"

The women thought it must be some twenty miles from Amalfi to the Point opposite Capri, where the Bay of Naples begins. I made it a much longer journey, by my unskilful tacking. I was mortally afraid of the cliffs, and yet I dared not sail too far away from them, in case the boat foundered.

"If we stick fast on a rock," I said, "we must stay in the boat nevertheless, until daylight. There will be some hope of rescue then. We should be visible from one of the watch towers, and the Duchess will find it harder to have us murdered by day. But, if the boat breaks up, you women must cling to the mast, and I will swim ashore with one of you at a time."

Even as I said this, I knew that "ashore" might mean only the foot of some unscaleable cliff. Our one hope was not to strike a rock. I told Costanza to keep a sharp look-out.

"There's a rock ahead," she told me. "No! Something bigger than a rock. Tom, I believe it's Gallo Lungo, where the Duke is. We could land there."

"Remember the hidden rocks guarding the way to the jetty!" said the Countess.

"Besides," I said, "that's where the man with the trident is most certain to be waiting. The Duchess had time to send him there on a fast boat, before we ever set sail."

"The Duke wouldn't let us be murdered," Costanza said.

"The Duke's asleep. If we were quietly strangled, and our bodies thrown into the sea, he'd know nothing about it."

So, regretfully, we turned seawards, and sailed past Gallo Lungo. Other, smaller islands followed, with mortally sharp outlines. All this time the Countess was baling out, yet the water in the boat never seemed to grow any less.

There was some whispering between the women. Costanza said:

"Tom, turn your back to us."

"I can't," I said. "I must watch where I'm steering the boat."

"Please! Just for a minute or two."

I lashed the tiller steady, and went forward, to take Costanza's place in the bows, looking out for rocks.

Behind me Costanza said: "Don't look round—and don't laugh!"

I understood that they were using the baler for a necessary purpose. It is awkward for a woman to spend many hours in an open boat. My own arrangements were more simple, since I was in any case leaning over the bows. Soon I was able to go back to the tiller.

"There!" said Costanza to her aunt. "I told you Tom was a gentleman."

A December night, so far south, ends perhaps an hour earlier than in England. Still, it is long enough. Hour by hour, it grew colder, and then it began to grow darker. The moon had almost set. In a few minutes we should be left without any light but starlight. I thought I should still be able to make out where the cliffs were. My worst fear was that I should fall asleep over the tiller. Despite the bitter cold, my head was beginning to nod.

I came out of a daze to hear Costanza saying: "Aunt Simonetta can't bale out any more; she's too cold. Here—have my cloak, Aunt Simonetta; I'll bale out, and that'll keep me warm."

So now we had nobody to look out for rocks. Whenever I tacked seaward, I lashed the tiller steady, went forward, looked out, returned, moved the tiller landward—and then dared not leave it, for fear of the cliffs. So it was only when we were moving seaward that I could see the rocks.

At least all this kept me awake. Now that the moon had set I saw that the sea was not, after all, growing darker. Scarcely believing, I lifted my face to the daybreak.

That first faint light showed us a world without colour. Pale grey sea beat against rocks of a darker grey. A headland stood in our path; I swung the boat away from it. And then I saw the cliff of Tiberius. We were level with Capri.

I knew there must be a safe channel between Capri and the mainland, because the ship to Amalfi had come that way. Trying desperately to remember just where it had sailed, I brought our

boat, inch by inch, past the Point of Campanella, and into the Bay of Naples.

Not slowly, as in England, but all at once, the colour came into the sky. I was now hugging the coast; the sea was growing rougher, and the boat could not hold out much longer. Costanza was still baling; her aunt cowered, shivering, upon the bench. I could see that she would die, if we did not soon reach a house with a fire.

We were out of the Duchess's territory now, but, by the look of that forbidding coast, not near the territory of any other human soul. I caught sight of a building on a rock, and only when I was almost too near for safety saw that it was the ruin of a heathen temple. I swung the boat out again, past the next jagged point. And then Costanza cried: "Look!"

She was pointing east, almost into the rising sun. Dazzled by its rays, half-blinded by the salt encrusted on my eyelashes, I nevertheless made out a beach, and a village.

It had the common, simple, blessed face of any fishing village in Italy. One row of small white houses faced the beach; behind them rose a church, and a bell tower; and above the tower a path went climbing to and fro into the vine-clad mountains. With a stiff and aching arm, I turned the tiller.

Someone had seen us. Men were gathering on the beach. I heard a shot, then another. We were sailing directly into arquebus fire, and we had not now the strength to sail in any other direction.

Costanza cried out: "They think we're Turks!"

"Keep your head down!" I said. I made both women crouch low. On my knees, I prayed as I lashed the tiller for the last time. Then I stood up in the bows, making the sign of the cross and shouting: "Siamo Christiani!"

Still there was another shot. I felt Costanza tugging at my waist, throwing her arms around me, pulling me down, trying to protect me with her own body.

And then the firing stopped. Men were wading out towards us; hands were pulling the boat ashore. I heard voices begging our forgiveness. "The Turks make the sign of the cross to deceive us; the Turks pretend to be mariners in distress. It was only when we saw the lady . . ."

The women of the village gathered round us. They were all talking at once, each family wanting to bring itself good luck by sheltering shipwrecked people. The Countess decided the matter by fainting. Since the men found her heavy to carry, they took her straight to the nearest house. Costanza stayed with her aunt, to look after her. I was ushered into the next house, so that another family should have a share of the good luck. It was dark inside; I knew nothing but that I was warm. For once a charcoal brazier seemed a great luxury.

I sat on a bench at a rough, dirty table, eating a sort of bread, drinking a sort of wine. For a moment it seemed enough that we were alive.

But, as the people questioned me, I understood that we might not live long. Someone asked me if we were the people the Spaniards wanted. "A whole troop of them, in the night, with torches, looking for three heretics . . . Don't you fret, signore; there's none of us would tell a Spaniard anything."

I went into the next house to warn Costanza. "We must pay one of these men to sail us to Sorrento," I said. "We should be able to board a proper ship there. But we must move at once."

"Aunt Simonetta can't move," Costanza said. "She's in a sort of cold fever."

In the darkness of the house I had not seen, till then, that the old lady was lying on a straw pallet, covered with her own cloak and Costanza's. Her teeth were chattering still, her hands and brow like ice.

"We'll kill her if we move her now," said Costanza. "I've seen this before in old people. I can make her better if I lie beside her, and hold her in my arms until she feels warm again. It won't be for ever, Tom. The people say the man who owns this place is away at his other estate. But he will be here, some time today. He's an Italian, not a Spaniard; I'm sure he'll help us."

There was nothing to be done. I went out into the sunshine. From the beach I was looking directly across the bay, at Vesuvius.

"What's this place called?" I asked.

They told me: Puolo. Sorrento, they said, was near, though out of sight.

"And where's your privy?" I asked.

They pointed to some rocks at one end of the village. Costanza came out asking the same question, and was directed to different rocks, at the other end.

The stench from both sets of rocks, the filth of the straw bed I soon lay down on, the noise of the children who played around me, could not prevent me from at once falling asleep.

17

Costanza shook me awake, saying: "The landowner is here." As I got up, and picked straws off my clothes, and hunted through my pockets for a comb, she whispered: "Tom, you remember this morning, when you were so very brave, and stood up and showed yourself to the bullets?"

"I'm not brave!" I said, yawning. "The only other time I was fired on, I ran away. This time I had nowhere to run."

"You were brave."

"Then what about you? You jumped up to protect me."

"That's just the trouble!" she cried out. She looked round at the host of ragged children, who had come to watch me comb my hair. Speaking French, her eyes downcast, she said: "Because they saw me put my arms around you—which none of their women would ever do, even to save a man's life—because of that, they think we must be married. I'm not dressed like a widow now. And . . . and . . . this landowner is offering us the best room in his house, which . . . which . . . Well, you see . . ."

There, in that stinking hovel, with children gaping round us, I took her in my arms. I lifted her shy face to mine, and smiled at the simplicity of her device. How easily, if she had liked, she could have told them that we were not married! There was a waiting stillness in her which I understood; when a woman can no longer talk or struggle against love, it makes her very silent and very still. With her silence, this glorious creature was inviting me to her bed. In silence, with a long kiss, I accepted the invitation.

Then I had to stop kissing her, because the house was filling up with fishermen. I thanked them for their hospitality, and offered them money. They would not touch it. Money would turn the good luck into bad, they said. So I told them that the boat was theirs, if they could mend it; nothing would induce me to set foot in it again.

We came out on to the beach, which, to my surprise, I found gilded with the sun of late afternoon. The landowner introduced himself as Ambrosio di Afflitto. From his haggard face and threadbare cloak I understood that he was miserably poor. Yet, with a gesture worthy of a king, he invited us to spend the night at his house. I gravely accepted, wondering what the Countess would say when she found that Costanza and I were masquerading as married.

But when the Countess was carried out of the hovel where she had been lying, I saw that she was not going to say a word. She was hardly conscious. Costanza, cunning girl, had reckoned on this. Yet she was really concerned for her aunt; she stayed as close as she could, while four stalwart men carried the Countess on a shutter up the steep path to the Afflitto house.

We passed the little church we had seen from the sea. It was locked. "Is there a priest here?" I asked Afflitto.

"No," he said. "The priest lives at Sorrento, and comes here on Sunday to say Mass."

I looked at Costanza. She looked at the ground. If there were no priest in the place, that settled it; I need not feel guilty for not marrying her first.

Ambrosio di Afflitto's house proved to be a fine stone building, but neglected, and almost bare inside. A truckle bed had been made up in a little room on the ground floor, and there we laid the Countess. She took a sip of wine, but whispered that she could eat nothing; she wanted only to sleep. While Costanza sat watching over her, Afflitto invited me to prepare for supper, and a servant conducted me to the "best room".

It had, certainly, a big bed. There was almost nothing else, except a table with one candle on it, and the usual charcoal brazier. The tapestries hung from the walls in sad-coloured rags. There was no glass in the windows; if the room was warm, it was because the shutters were too tightly closed to let in one breath of air. The bed canopies I looped back; we would be better off without breathing their velvety dust. It was a great relief to find that the sheets were clean.

The servant offered me cold water to wash in; I had to give him money before he would bring me a hot kettleful. But at last I was able to change into clean clothes. I dressed quickly; I

felt that Costanza would not enter the room until I had left it. Having offered me her body, she had become all the more modest and shy.

I went down and found her still watching her aunt, who seemed to have fallen into a pleasant, natural sleep. "Go upstairs," I said to Costanza, trying to sound like a man long married. "I've left half the hot water for you."

When she came down to supper she looked so lovely that our host and his wrinkled wife blinked at the sight of her. She was, at last, wearing her low-cut dress. Her bosom gleamed through a gauzy scarf which was delicately embroidered. I knew that all this was meant for me, and yet she did not look at me. Calmly, sweetly, she talked to our host and hostess, expressing our thanks, and advising them on the protection of their vines from the frost. I found myself nearly dumb. I behaved like a man who can think of nothing but his food, though it was not my food I was thinking of. (It was indeed not worth much thought, being only a mess of pasta, with a few starveling fish.)

Costanza said: "I hear the Spaniards have already been troubling the village on our account. It is a most unfortunate misunderstanding. We shall be able to explain it all to the Viceroy, if only we can reach Naples. You see, my husband, though he was born in England, is the Viceroy's first cousin."

Afflitto and his wife looked at each other.

"I told you," said the wife, "they must be important people. Offering that amount . . ."

"Is there a reward out for us?" I asked.

"No—it was just a rumour among the peasants," Afflitto said. "These peasants of ours—they'll believe anything."

"I hope we shall not have to trouble you for more than this one night," went on Costanza. "My aunt seems much better. If she is well enough to travel tomorrow, perhaps one of these kind fishermen will sail us to Sorrento."

"Please do not think yourselves obliged to leave us tomorrow!" said Afflitto. "Our house is yours."

Gratitude could not prevent me from finding his company irksome. When Costanza said that it was time to see how her aunt was, I gladly went with her. The old lady, sleeping still, seemed in no need of our care.

"You go to bed first," I whispered. "I will join you in a quarter of an hour."

Certainly I waited no more than that, though it seemed a long time. My host told me that he had been ruined by raiding Turks, ruined again when the Spaniards levied money to build the watch towers, ruined a third time by bandits who lurked in the mountains to fight the Spaniards . . . I could think only of the way upstairs.

But what I found waiting for me, at the turn of the stairs, was my conscience. I told it to be silent; this was predestinate. God had given this woman into my hands. And yet when I saw her sitting in the bed, holding the blankets up to her chin, looking at me with eyes as wide and frightened as a child's, I was abashed. Not touching her, only looking, I sat down on the end of the bed.

"Tell me," I said, "do you truly know what you are doing?"

She nodded.

"And this is not . . . because I can sail a boat?"

She tried to smile, but could not. In a voice so low that I could hardly hear it, she said: "I have loved you and longed for you such an extraordinary time . . ."

I was like a man choked with weeping; I could not speak. I felt for the cross at my neck, and then remembered she would think that a bauble. When I could find words, I asked her: "Where's your Italian Gospel?"

She took it from under her pillow. I laid it between us on the bed, and made her put her hand there, and laid my hand on her hand.

I said: "Before God, I swear I love you, and take you for my wife."

She whispered: "Before God, I swear I love you, and take you for my husband."

In turn we kissed the book, and then, very gently, each other.

And still I delayed, pulling off my clothes awkwardly, making a great fidget as I opened the shutter to let out the charcoal fumes. Even then I scarcely dared to get into bed. This was so different from any other time I had gone to bed with a woman, that I was afraid of something which had never happened before. I thought I would fail her.

She understood this from the moment that she felt how I was trembling. Gently, she murmured that I need not fret; it would be enough to lie like this. All she wanted was to kiss my brow, which had so often furrowed as I thought of stratagems to save her. She wanted to caress the strong arm which had grasped the tiller. Then, so long as she could put her head upon my shoulder, she would be content to go to sleep.

"Liar!" I whispered. "Beautiful, sweet, kind liar!"

My trembling stopped. Then we made love. The word, for once, is right. It was love we made.

We were so happy in each other's company, we could not go to sleep. When we were sated, when we were worn out, we still talked on and on. I told her when I had first known I loved her, and what anguish I had felt.

"Oh, I am glad you did not tell me then," she said. "I would have been so angry! And then you would have gone away for ever."

"Would you really have been angry? Only angry?"

"Of course. I never could have betrayed Federico. I did love him."

"I know."

"Oh, if you must have all the truth, I would have been . . . angry with myself, more than with you. Because I did feel your nearness, like thunder in the air. It made me tease you, and say sharp things to you, and cling to Federico all the more, because he was my protection against my own wanton feelings. But when he died—in that instant I lost every feeling for you. I thought it was for ever. I could think of nothing but my longing for him. When I told you I did not want you to travel with me, that was true."

"It was true—for how long?"

"Weeks . . . months . . ."

"I thought when you crossed the frontier, and saw that I had everything ready for you, you would love me a little then."

"Of course I loved everybody who helped us escape from Geneva—Tim, and Rosa, and their neighbours, and the landlady of the inn. Oh yes! One thing I did like you for, that day. Although you were in love with me, you did not come downstairs to meet me. You would not leave your window till you saw that Tim was safe."

"I thought you liked me when I told you about England."

"I liked listening to you. But the kinder you were, the more you did to protect me, the more I thought—what a pity that this is the wrong man! Until you stopped trying to please me, and did what I told you not to."

"When?"

"When you scowled, and turned your back on me, and went stamping into one church after another, to order Masses for your friend. You knew it was all nonsense and a waste of money, but your friend would have liked it! Do you remember, after that, you growled at me, and said I was looking too young? I thought you must know it was because I had fallen in love with you."

"I've been slow, then. We should have done this before."

"No—I wasn't sure. That is, I was sure I loved you, but I thought it couldn't lead to any good. I thought my life among the Protestants here, in Italy, was my real life. Well! The Duchess cured me of that. And Tom, when they were firing on us, and you stood up in the boat, then I knew I couldn't bear it if you were killed, and I had never held you in my arms."

At that memory I began to kiss her again. When you are almost too tired for making love, the pleasure is more gentle, more prolonged, more sweet; the storm of passion more astonishing.

Costanza murmured: "Even if we die tomorrow . . ."

"We won't die."

"Do you think we shall come out of this alive?"

"With God's help."

"And then—how can we live?"

"We're not poor." I put her fingers on the gold cross at my neck, and made her feel the stones. "Those are diamonds," I told her.

"But *caro caro* Tom, where can we live? I'm a heretic, and you're a Catholic of sorts. What country in the world will ever let us live together?"

I thought of Marco's sister, weeping because she was forbidden to see him, of Galeazzo's wife sailing away all in black, of Timothy striking his young wife to the ground, when she attacked his faith. I said: "If there is any place on earth where people have grown weary of tormenting one another for religion, I believe it may be England. Elizabeth's compromise may suit us both."

"England . . . Will we really sit by a great open fire, and Aunt Simonetta in the chimney corner?"

"Of course! And you'll play the lute, or I'll tell stories. Or you'll sing our babies to sleep . . . Costanza, why are you crying?"

"I had a baby, and sang to him, and he died."

"God must let some children live. We'll have sons, Costanza. Or daughters. I don't mind, so long as they look like you."

"And shall we live in this brick house, with its meadow, and its garden full of roses?"

"Of course, of course we shall."

"And shall I really ride about those gentle hills, alone? I'd rather ride with you, Tom."

"So you shall. But not every day, because I'll be in London, interpreting for the merchants. Sometimes, maybe, for the Queen. But I don't want to be anyone's hireling, even Elizabeth's. In a great port like London there are ways to make a good living, and still be my own master."

"I'll have to learn English in earnest," Costanza said. "Tell me again what my name is."

"Constancy."

Towards dawn I heard her murmur that she must, she really must, get up and see if her aunt was better.

Somebody was knocking at the door. "*Avanti!*" I said. I had forgotten that the bed-curtains were drawn, the shutter open, and full daylight shining on us both.

The person who came in was the Countess. Dressed, upright, and apparently in perfect health, she stood and looked at us lying there together. Costanza awoke and said: "Oh."

The Countess calmly nodded to each of us in turn, and left the room. Costanza jumped out of bed, wrapped herself in a cloak, and followed her on to the landing. I heard the old lady say: "If you think that what I have just seen has been the surprise of my life, you are making a great mistake. I was not born yesterday."

While I hastily put my shirt on, I heard Costanza's voice—the voice of a little girl. "Truly, we do mean to be married."

"Indeed!" said the Countess. "Then we had better make haste, and travel on to some place where marriages can be made."

Having now got my doublet on, I asked the Countess to come back into the room. She came reluctantly. "I did not think," she said, "that you had come so far, and exposed yourself to so many dangers, to be with an old woman. But I thought I could protect my niece from your advances, until her proper time of mourning was over. It seems, however, that I am no match for a hardened libertine."

"A former hardened libertine," I said. "Former scoundrel, former coward, but now Costanza's love! Come! Be our friend, and keep Costanza company, when we settle in England."

"England!" said the Countess. "What makes you think we shall get there alive? I wish I could be sure of reaching Sorrento. I do not like this house. There is something about our host and hostess which makes me very uneasy."

I agreed with her. And yet, when we came downstairs, the couple overwhelmed us with kindness. We must not think of going, they said, without breakfast. Though the breakfast was only bread and wine, they made it stretch on and on, as they pestered us with their conversation. Then the menservants were in the vineyards, and could not carry our baggage. I said I should carry it myself, but they would not hear of this. One by one, the menservants appeared . . . We gave the servants money, but we could not offer money to our host, since he was a gentleman. Costanza gave our hostess the embroidered gauzy scarf she had worn the night before. There were long speeches, before the woman would accept it. It was past noon, when we came down to the beach at last.

Our host directed us, with his regal wave, to a small rowing boat.

"Will it carry us all?" I asked.

"These things are stronger than they look. And there's only two miles to go. I've told the man to land you at a little beach, just outside Sorrento, and carry your baggage to an inn I know —a good place to wait for a ship. Good luck!" And he embraced me warmly.

All the villagers waved us goodbye. It was a clear, sunny winter day. The boat, though I thought it overloaded, moved sweetly through the calm water. I sat in the stern beside Costanza, my arm about her waist.

I whispered: "Our boatman's face looks like the model for a Roman coin."

"Oh yes!" Costanza said. "How handsome he is!"

"You are supposed to go on: 'But not as handsome as you.'"

"But not as handsome as you," she said laughing, and then added: "Do you really want me to tell you lies?"

I pinched her cheek, and then kissed it better. The Countess, sitting very upright in the bows, looked away from us.

The boatman, since he knew that rocky coast, kept closer to it than I should have dared. When we were out of sight of Puolo, he turned aside, and made for a natural archway in the rocks. We shot under the arch, and found ourselves in a perfectly circular pool, surrounded by cliffs.

"It's Queen Giovanna's bath!" said Costanza. "Aunt Simonetta, do you remember? You brought me here, when I was a little girl, just after my parents died. Tom, do you see that beach? And the little path, leading down to it? That's where we came down, and took off our clothes, and bathed naked, because it is supposed to bring good luck."

The old lady said: "We set our servants to watch the upper path, the one that leads to Capo di Sorrento. The villagers quite understood they had to keep away; it's an old custom for ladies to bathe here. For fertility, or some such nonsense. In those days I still dreamed that I might have a child." She looked sadly at Costanza. "You were five years old, splashing and laughing . . . You were a good girl then."

"She is a good girl now," I said.

"That," said the Countess, "is a thesis worthy of a formal disputation."

"Don't be cross, Aunt Simonetta!" Costanza pleaded. "We need your blessing."

"Oh, you shall have it," said the Countess, "at the proper time." She turned to the boatman. "We had better hurry on to Sorrento. This is a beautiful place, but quite out of our way. Why did you bring us here?"

The boatman said: "Signor di Afflitto told me you had particularly asked to see it."

We stared at one another. "Let's go at once!" I said.

The boatman turned the bows towards the rocky archway. We

heard a shot. I looked up at the rock above the arch; and saw a Spanish soldier, in helmet and cuirass, carrying an arquebus. Behind us, a voice said in bad Italian: "Beach the boat, and surrender!"

The circle of rock now carried a circle of soldiers. Their officer, with sword drawn, was coming down the path to the beach. I cried out to the boatman: "You brought us here on purpose!"

"No, signore, no! Afflitto deceived me as well as you!"

Costanza muttered: "And to think I gave that woman my best scarf!"

"Surrender!" said the Spanish officer again.

I said in Spanish: "We surrender, but be careful how you treat us. I am the Viceroy's cousin, and these are ladies of noble birth."

The boatman brought us to the beach. Tears were streaming down his face. The officer waved him aside, but ordered us up the path. He told two soldiers to bring up our baggage. "To be searched," he said.

When we reached the rocky plateau above the pool, the soldiers surrounded us. They took away my sword and pistol. Then they found my passport.

"Signed by Cardinal Pole!" said the officer. "That's cunning! You know that he can't be asked to vouch for you, since he's dead."

I said that was the first I had heard of it.

"A cousin of the Viceroy," said the officer, sneering, "should be better informed."

"For all that," I said, "I am the Viceroy's cousin."

"With an English passport?"

I was explaining this, when the Countess began to struggle against the soldiers who held her.

"You dare not search me!" she cried out. "If I'm to be searched, it must be by a woman!"

Still a soldier tried to put his hand in her bosom, and she screamed, as only a woman can scream. It is the best weapon they have. The soldiers were so deafened that for a moment they let her go. She ran along the rocky path, until she stood above the beach, and there she turned to defy them. She cried out: "You

dare not touch me! I am Simonetta di Salerno, Countess of Pescarola, descended from the Kings of Naples and of Spain."

One man fired. She fell, turning in mid-air, showing petticoats, fat knees, flesh bulging over garters . . . The pool gave her back her dignity. She lay there floating, her eyes open wide, her skirts gently spreading out, to hide what she would have wished hidden. The boatman waded out and brought her ashore. The wound was in her heart; already the clear pool had grown murky with her blood.

Costanza was all this time crying: "Let me go to her! Let me go!" But the soldiers held her fast.

The officer turned to the soldier who had fired, and struck him in the face. "You fool!" he shouted. "I'll have you flogged for this. You know very well the orders were to bring both women for questioning. Can the Archbishop question that?" He pointed to the dead Countess.

So they did not mean to murder Costanza. But a troop led by a sergeant set her on a horse, and bound her hands, and began to lead her away.

I cried out: "No! You must not separate us! She is my wife." I cried it in Italian, and then again in Spanish. "She is my wife!"

She looked round at me, and I saw that her head was high still, her eyes wide, without a tear. Then they prodded her horse into a lane between stone walls, and I could not see her any more.

When the officer could make me listen, he told me that I need not be so frantic for my wife. "She's going to one of the best convents in Naples. They know she's a noblewoman; they'll treat her accordingly."

"But on the way? Those ruffians of yours may rape or kill her."

"Oh, I never allow any rape. I've hanged three men for that; I think the rest have learned."

With no more than middling roughness, I was hoisted on a horse, and escorted by a dizzy, swooping path into Sorrento. To the few townspeople who stood round about, I cried out that I was an innocent man, and, besides, the Viceroy's cousin. And: "They have parted me from my wife!" The people watched and listened, but seemed sunk in their own sullen misery. Then I

cried out: "Ambrosio di Afflitto sold us for the reward!" And at that I did see some eyes flicker, some heads begin to turn. The soldiers led me to the harbour, and bundled me on to a ship of the Spanish Navy.

I asked the officer whether Costanza was aboard. He said no; she was travelling by land, staying at convents on the way.

I shared a cabin with my captor. "My orders are not to take my eyes off you," he said. "You are supposed to be a very cunning spy."

"I'm not a spy. This is all because Calvin denounced me to the Viceroy."

"Calvin? What—that old blaspheming devil, who has orgies in the churches? You must be mistaken; our Viceroy wouldn't pay any attention to him."

The sailors put steaming plates of pasta before us. I pushed mine away.

"Come!" said the officer, quite pleasantly. "You'll need all your strength." I thought this was true, and so I tried to eat, but my throat was too dry.

On the way to Naples I collected my wits well enough to explain to the officer, calmly and soberly, that I really was the Viceroy's cousin. I saw that he was treating me with special courtesy, in case it might be true.

"But in that case," he said, "you'd surely have known better than to mix with heretics. Simonetta and Costanza di Salerno are notorious here. They've had warrants out against them fourteen years."

I could only repeat: "Costanza is my wife!" He was tired of hearing this, and asked me for news of England. But I knew less than he did. I asked him how Cardinal Pole had died. Had the new Queen turned revengeful, and sent him to the block?

"No; I haven't heard of her executing anyone. Cardinal Pole died in bed, the very day after Queen Mary."

We sailed into Naples by night, and I was hurried into the Castello dell'Ovo. I told the Castellan, the soldiers, the warders, that I was the Viceroy's cousin, and wanted to see him. None of them believed me. And yet, like the officer, they became cautious, in case it might be true. The Castellan said he would inform the Viceroy, when he returned from Sicily. Then he gave orders

that I was not to be fettered. They only took away my baggage, my money, my gold cross, and then pushed me—threw me, rather—down a steep winding stair. A door was locked behind me; I was in a room without a blink of light.

Feeling my way, I found a bed and a chair. By the smell, I discovered the hole in the floor which was to serve me for a privy. Somewhere below this hole I heard the sea lapping. So I was at least not lower than sea-level. Yet the place was clammy and cold. The bed had a straw mattress and two blankets. They smelt foul, but a bad smell could not kill me. Still fully dressed, I crawled under the blankets. Then I felt that they were damp. I could not make up my mind whether I was colder with or without them. In either case, I could not sleep.

I knew when it was morning, because the blackness of the room turned to dark grey. There was a sort of slantwise opening, high up in the wall. I could not see out of it, even by putting the chair on the bed, and standing on it. The slit gave just light enough to show me how dirty the room was.

A jailer brought me a mug of water and a piece of bread. I demanded news of Costanza. I demanded to know when the Viceroy would return. I demanded hot water, a clean shirt, candles, books, paper and pen, ink, a brazier . . .

This last the jailer was willing to discuss. I could have a brazier, he said, if I paid. I told him the Castellan had all my money, but added that my cousin, the Viceroy, would be angry if he came back to find me dead of cold.

To my surprise, the man brought me a red-hot brazier. After that a fresh one came every morning and every evening. There were long cold intervals, but while the charcoal was actually glowing I could dry the blankets a little, and make myself warm enough to sleep. I thought someone must be calculating just how much warmth was needed to keep me alive.

I was fed on the same principle. The unvarying bread and water kept me from dying. My dreams were haunted by feasts, and especially by that platter of pasta which I had refused.

Evidently nobody thought I should die of not washing, or not having any clean clothes. I itched all over, partly from fleas, and partly from my own dried sweat. The fleas I spent hours in catching, one by one. There is this to be said for a flea; once you kill

it, its bites immediately stop itching. There were no bugs or lice; it must have been too cold for them.

On the third day a priest came and urged me to become a Catholic. He seemed put out when I assured him I was one already. From this man I had my first news of Costanza. The Archbishop was going to put her on trial, he said. Then he added: "You're not a good Catholic, or you'd never have kept company with that woman. She's a thorn in the flesh of the nuns looking after her."

I thought only: She is alive. Aloud I said she was my wife, and the priest asked when I had met her, and where. I told him I would answer any questions which my cousin, the Viceroy, might put to me in person. I went on saying this to all the interrogators who visited me. They questioned me in various languages, and so I said it in Italian, in Latin, in Spanish and in French. Once I said it even in English, because they sent a merchant who spoke our language, to find out whether I really was an Englishman.

One of the interrogators told me that I would be forced to testify, when Costanza came to trial. That was a great comfort; if she had not been tried, she could not yet be burned.

I lost count of the days. One morning I asked the jailer, and he said I had been there a week. So I made seven scratches with my nails on the wooden frame of my bed, and every morning I added one. I kept one nail long for the purpose. The rest I pared by rubbing them against a rough part of the wall.

It seemed they had grown tired of interrogating me. My only talk was with the jailer, for a few minutes twice a day. The talk was not amusing; on his side it consisted of the word: "No".

I heard all the bells of Naples ring for Christmas Day. I could hear other sounds – the calling of the sea-birds, the clatter of arms as one sentry relieved another, the cries of sailors making ready to land. To feel that the gay, sunlit city was close to me, that it cared nothing for me, and that I could do nothing to make it care, deepened the darkness of my cell.

When I had been in Cardinal Pole's prison, Michael had pleaded for me. Now Michael was dead, and could intercede only in Heaven.

I prayed, and my prayers were answered. Visions came to comfort me – not visions of the saints, but of known human faces.

I found I could remember, image by image, word by word, everything that had happened in the past year. Those earlier memories, of baseness and betrayal, had all been exorcised. Almost eighteen months ago Margaret had told me that I was always a hireling. It was not true now. Since I had been my own master I had not for the most part, lived wickedly. Even to Miliella I had, perhaps, done more good than harm. I had saved Marco from the Inquisition. I had helped Michael to make a good end. In spite of all temptation I had been an honest friend to Federico. I had loved Costanza long and honourably—for I could not think of our lovemaking as anything but a true marriage. The priest was right; I was not a good Catholic. I should never be much of a Catholic again. If Elizabeth would let me see stained glass, and let me hear the singing of a choir, I would gladly say my prayers in English to please her. But I should always believe in God, because God had let me spend one night with my Costanza.

In her face, and in those other friendly faces, which floated through the stinking darkness of my cell, I saw what was divine in human creatures—the power to love. I never doubted that such love could reach me, even in this pit.

There were forty-two scratches on my bed. Each day seemed an eternity, and yet the six weeks had gone by like a dream.

The door opened. The usual jailer came in, but not in the usual manner. He was respectful. He brought me a jug of hot water, and a bowl, and a towel. And then another man came, with clean clothes—my own clothes, from my baggage. And then a third, with my gold cross, and my money.

When I had, with infinite pleasure, washed my body, I asked for more hot water, to wash my hair and beard. They said the barber would do that for me. And soon this barber appeared, with boys carrying razors, and bowls, and candles. I shut my eyes, because the candles hurt them. I felt the barber shave my beard right off, and crop my hair. "It's the fashion," he said. I did not mind, so long as I was clean. At last, fully dressed, smelling of soap and pomade, I was ushered out. I staggered in the light, but gentle hands guided me up the winding staircase down which I had been thrown. Then I was led up a broad, straight staircase, and into a room where lights and colours violently stabbed at me. It was only that it had a window. I stood overwhelmed by the

sparkling of water, the movement of sails, the ordinary colour of the sky.

"My dear cousin!" someone said in Spanish. "Pray forgive this most unfortunate misunderstanding. I have been in Sicily all this time; I have only just learned . . ."

This must be the Viceroy. I knelt. But he raised me up, and made me sit beside him. Cakes and wine were brought for me.

I said: "Where is Costanza?"

"Who? Oh, that . . . Heresy is the Archbishop's business, you know. She's in his care."

"But is she alive? Is she well? How is the Archbishop treating her?"

"We are not savages," the Viceroy said. "Whatever she may have become, Costanza di Salerno was born a noblewoman, and of course the Archbishop is treating her according to her rank. She is in a convent where all the nuns are of noble birth."

"Did your men treat the Countess according to her rank, when they murdered her in cold blood?"

"Unfortunate . . . She was trying to escape."

"Or me? How have they been treating me?"

"I am sorry. Very sorry indeed. You see, my people did not believe you were my cousin."

"They might at least have inquired —"

"Unfortunately they were prejudiced in advance. There was a letter which came to Naples before you did. It warned us of a dangerous English spy called Thomas Vaughan. The letter said that you were fluent in at least four languages – which was found to be true – had the manners of a gentleman, and made a habit of claiming close connections with important people."

"That was from Calvin. But why should you believe him?"

"My dear cousin, whatever we may think of Calvin's religion, he has always been a most reliable informant."

"I suppose he denounced the women, too?"

"No."

I was wondering why not. "Tell me, Excelencia," I said, "do you try heretics in public here?"

"As a rule."

"And spies in secret?"

"If at all."

"Calvin reckoned on that, then. He thought I could be finished off without fuss. But the women might publicly say what they knew about him."

"I thought," said the Viceroy, "that they were followers of his."

"Former followers."

"Then that would explain —" He smiled.

"It explains why the Duchess of Amalfi denounced them to you."

"For a man who is not a spy," said the Viceroy, "you show a most remarkable knowledge of your enemies."

"I could hardly miss that woman. She tried to have us all three murdered."

"And failed? That's not like her . . . You don't know, my dear cousin, what difficulties I have here. We have to tolerate the Duchess, knowing very well that she's a heretic, because she does at least keep order in her own territory. Most of these Italians can't rule themselves, and they won't let anyone else rule them. That man who sheltered you, Ambrosio di Afflitto, has had his house gutted by fire. And do you think we can find out who did it? . . . Have another biscuit, my dear cousin; it's pleasant to see you with such a good appetite. You resemble me in that way, I see. The Castellan thought there was a resemblance between us; that was why he treated you with some care, and gave you a room to yourself."

"A dungeon."

"My dear cousin, if you call that a dungeon, you should see the place underneath! But I am sorry. It should not have happened. At least you were not fettered. What sort of food did they bring you?"

"Bread and water."

"No mould on the bread?"

"No, it was quite fresh."

"And the water was good, I'm sure. We have very good water in Naples, now that the aqueducts are working again."

Was this man's face – the lean, oval face of a Spanish nobleman – really like mine? I could see no sign of that. I asked him: "How did you find out that I was your cousin?"

"Just as I returned from Sicily, a letter came from the Doge of Venice. It seems the news of your arrest caused quite a stir on

the Rialto. And some favourite of the Doge's, a Jewish favourite—God! These Venetians! But even a Jew can be good for something. This one told the Doge that he had seen you at the English court, and again in Venice. He testified that you really were the son of"—he paused—"my unfortunate aunt. The Doge was doubtful at first. He had had a letter like mine, denouncing you as a spy. It seems that Calvin sent it to every state in Europe. The Doge compared notes with some foreign envoys, and found that, when Calvin wrote to the Catholic states about you, he said you were a spy for Elizabeth. When he wrote to the Protestant states, he said you were spying for Queen Mary. So that it did look as if Calvin were pursuing some private spite. What did you do to the man?"

"I told the people of Geneva something they knew already."

"What a dangerous habit! The people here know that they hate us, and that they outnumber us, but if you were to tell them . . . No, no, I am sure you will settle down here very well. You speak excellent Italian, they tell me. And your knowledge of English will be most useful, now that England is going to be connected even more closely with Spain."

I could not hide my surprise. He told me: "King Philip has already asked the Pope for a dispensation, so that he can marry Elizabeth."

"But has Elizabeth accepted him?"

"What else can she do? It must be a match beyond her wildest dreams. A Queen with no real right to the throne, in a small country without allies . . ."

"Nevertheless," I said, "I believe she will refuse."

"If you prove right," said the Viceroy, "I shall employ you as my fortune-teller. Seriously, my dear cousin, I mean to find you a post of some honour. And some profit."

He smiled most graciously, and something in the smile made me believe that he had never cared whether I was his cousin or not. What he cared for was to have a good name in the world, as a man who treated his relations well. I could have stayed forever in my dungeon, if it had not been for the Doge's letter. This thought made me, for the moment, speechless.

He went on: "Your own property has been restored to you, of course? Then tell me—what can I do for you?"

I said: "Give me back my Costanza."

"Oh, the widow. What do you want her for?"

"She's my wife."

"Surely that is rather an exaggeration? As I understand it, there has been no actual ceremony."

"We are sworn to each other."

"Oh, if that's all . . . A promise to a heretic is not binding; surely you know that? And I can do so much better for you! Don't you know what my power is here? One word—and I find you a duke's daughter, with a dowry to match."

"I don't want to marry anyone but Costanza."

"My dear cousin, apart from her being a heretic, there's her character."

I felt the blood pound in my brow. The Viceroy turned pale. But he carried it off gracefully.

"Forgive me—I thought you knew. She's been in the Archbishop's care for the past six weeks. A typical Italian! As obstinate as a mule! She'll agree to hear Mass, she'll agree to confess to a priest—but it's never a proper confession; she'll never admit she's done wrong. And she flatly refuses to say what friends she has in this country. At last, yesterday, the poor old Archbishop lost his temper, and threatened her with the rack. And she said that by his own laws he could not torture a pregnant woman. Six weeks gone, she told him, without a blush. And her husband dead—is it six months?"

"The child's mine!" I cried out. I could have kissed him, for giving me the news.

"Then you do know her character," the Viceroy said. "You surely cannot intend to marry a woman who let you take her without marriage? Is that the custom in England?"

"A good custom anywhere," I said. "How else can you be sure that the woman is warm and loving?"

The Viceroy looked as if I had struck him. "I must warn you," he said, "that, with such a wife, you could not hold any public office under me."

"I do not ask to."

"But surely you know that Spain is the greatest power in the world. Do you know what our gold mines in Peru have sent us in the past year?"

I did not, and did not want to, but he told me none the less.

It was some time before I could make him understand that I did not want Peru, or Mexico, or all the Indies, but only Costanza. At last he said: "If you do marry this deplorable woman, will you be responsible for taking her immediately where she can do no harm?"

"By the first ship that sails," I said, "if you will give us a safe-conduct. And a letter to Queen Elizabeth to say that, whatever Calvin may have told her, I am a loyal subject of hers, and your cousin."

To this he agreed. He summoned his Major-domo, who conducted me to a handsome room. The wide bed was embroidered with the royal arms of Spain. Soon I was visited by a priest. He had come to prepare me, he said, for taking the sacrament at my marriage. So I made my confession to him, and he led me into the Viceroy's private chapel, which was otherwise deserted. An altar-boy appeared, and then a sour-faced secretary, and then, under a guard of nuns, Costanza.

I brushed the nuns aside—I would have thrown them—to take her in my arms. She cried out: "Oh, Tom! Are you a ghost?"

Kissing her, I felt her fingers tracing out my bones.

"You're thin!" she said. "So thin! Oh, Tom, what did they do to you?"

"What did they do to you?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing, nothing! Look, I'm as fat as ever."

"Have I truly given you a child? Can you be sure, so soon?"

"I fainted. That's only the second time in my life. And, oh, Tom, I've just had to tell a garlicky old priest about it. They said I must make my confession, before I could be married."

The nuns had been all this time trying to separate us, and make us take our places decorously at the altar.

"Come!" I said. "This once, let's do as Rome does."

We stood side by side. One of the nuns made her take off her wedding ring and give it to me, so that I could put it on her finger at the proper time. Costanza gave me one little mocking glance, and shrugged her shoulders, as if to say that this mummery was a thing we could not avoid. But after that her demeanour gave the priest no cause to complain.

It was over at last. I kissed her. The sour-faced secretary interrupted us. Ignoring my wife, he said to me: "Señor, there is a ship

leaving for Barcelona at noon tomorrow. It is the Viceroy's pleasure that you should sail on it."

"Our pleasure, too," I said.

We were conducted back to the stately room, and there we found a table laid for two, with rich food and a choice of wines. We dismissed the servants who hovered about. But if you think that we made love before we ate, you have never spent six weeks on bread and water.

"Oh, I've been hungry too!" Costanza said, luxuriously savouring a capon. "But not on my own account. It's your baby—he's a greedy little boy. But the worst thing was not knowing what they had done to you. Every time the Archbishop questioned me, I questioned him about you. He always said the same. The Viceroy would look into the matter, when he came back from Sicily. And once he said you'd be wanted to give evidence at my trial. So I knew that at least, at least you must be alive."

I told her how I had known that she was alive.

"Tom, are we truly sitting here? And free? What happened?"

"Marco Rafael persuaded the Doge to intervene."

"Marco Rafael! And we so often think that one good person can do nothing, against all the world . . . Tom, what can we do to repay him?"

I considered this. "He's not in any need of money. The one thing he wants is to know what Geneva is like. I ought to write down all I've seen, and find some safe way to send it to him." (Which is how this book came to be written.)

"Shall we call the baby Marco?" she asked.

"Mark. He'll be an Englishman."

"And if it's a girl?"

"Constancy."

When at last we had eaten our fill, and summoned the servants to clear away, we still sat looking and looking.

"You seem so much younger without your beard!" she said.

"Not so young as you. I thought you'd be red-eyed with weeping."

"Oh no! They could not make me shed one tear. Not even for Aunt Simonetta! Although I'm sorry she'll never sit in our chimney corner. But she died so quickly, so splendidly! That was how she prayed to die—do you remember? I laughed in the Archbishop's face when I told him that she was out of his power. He

was angry—he was angry even with the fishermen, because they gave her Christian burial. And she died friends with us, after all! She said she would give us her blessing. But, Tom, what I remembered best was that, when they parted us, you cried out: 'She is my wife!' And so I knew our marriage was already made. Not here, not now, not in that stink of incense, but when we called God to witness that we loved each other. After that no power on earth could make me weep!"

She did weep, when she saw me naked, and fingered my thin ribs. And then again before dawn, she sobbed and cried in a nightmare. I woke her with my kisses, and she said: "Oh, those nuns! We used to laugh at nuns who broke their vows, but nuns who keep them are far worse. They choked me with their chastity. Sometimes I thought I'd never lie in a man's arms again. Tom! Are you really there?"

I said: "I'm not sure I am. Because the Tom that used to be wanted nothing in the world more than money, and a place at court, and marriage to an heiress. The Viceroy offered me all that, and the old Tom never stirred. He must be dead."

"He offered you so much?"

"All the kingdoms of the world, if I abandoned you."

"You *are* in love with me."

I said: "I am redeemed." And in the appeasement of our long hungering, in the delights we now had leisure to enjoy, I felt the promise of an everlasting happiness.

We sailed away, and as we sailed the winter left us. When we came to Barcelona, it was already spring. To Valencia, to Cartagena, to Gibraltar, to Cadiz, the warm winds followed us. Spain, whose tongue I knew so well, whose face I had never seen, made me long for my own green England. To explore the Spanish ports was a pleasure to us both, but not such a pleasure as our exploration, every day renewed, of one another.

It was a pleasure, even, to sail into the fierce Atlantic winds, because they carried us more swiftly to the home we meant to build. When we came to Dunkirk, in the Spanish Netherlands, we found a smaller ship, which would bring us up the Thames to London. We had a cabin to ourselves, with an iron stove burning in it. But Costanza's pregnancy made her long for air, and after dinner we came out on deck. Though it was now the beginning of

May, the wind blew cold out of a cold grey sky. All we could see of England was a wet mist where the land should be.

"I need a cloak like one of those," Costanza whispered.

Two ladies near us on the deck were hooded and cloaked in sable. It cascaded to the ground more softly than the richest of black velvet. Then we saw that one of them carried, lapped in the folds of the fur, something that stirred.

"*Un bambino!*" Costanza cried out.

"*Sì, ho un bambino,*" said the lady proudly, and pulled back the fur a little, to let us look. The baby regarded us with great lustrous black eyes. A man's voice called: "Tisiphone! Giulia!"

While Costanza played with the baby, I went to greet the Marquis of Oria. I reminded him that we had met on the frontier of Geneva.

"The Englishman!" he said, embracing me warmly. "I told you I meant to visit your country. We were delayed a little, because my Tisiphone —" He indicated the baby. He added in a whisper: "The silly girl forgot her vinegar sponge. Now Giulia's jealous; I'll have to give her one too."

I said: "When I last met you, I envied you those girls. Now I don't envy anyone on earth." I presented him to Costanza.

"My friend from Geneva!" he cried out in delight.

"I owe you a great deal of money," Costanza said.

"I am repaid in seeing you safe. Where did you go, after Federico's death? I heard that you were going to be burned in Naples. I am happy to see otherwise—and happy for you," he added, turning to me. "What did you do to deserve the best wife in the world?"

"Oh, not much," I said. "What was Poland like?"

"Poland! Never mention the word to me again! If I believed in such things I'd say that a journey to Poland was penance for all my sins, past, present and to come. The furs are cheap, that's all I can say for the place." He paused to give a finger to his baby. "Is England," he asked, "a good country for children?"

"We hope so," said Costanza.

"You mean to settle here? My friend from Basle, the philosopher Aconcio, is in England already. Queen Elizabeth has granted him a pension. Whether for his belief in religious freedom, or because

he is good at designing fortifications ... This Queen has a particular fondness for the Italian exiles. No doubt she cannot understand what they say."

"Oh, she can," I told him. "Queen Elizabeth speaks Italian."

"A queen who speaks Italian! Giulia! Tisiphone! Do you hear that? We can settle down at last."

He peered through the wet air. My country lay before us, dim and sodden, but green, green. Whatever Oria had failed to find in Poland, or Basle, or Venice, he seemed now to be tracing in the mist.

"I am sorry that there is no sun to welcome you," I said.

Oria smiled. "Perhaps this is the city that has no need of the sun."

From the frying-pan of Catholicism into the fire of heresy — and back again

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ISBN 0 340 15807 7